AFTER THE BATTLE

50 YEARS AGO

DANZIG

THE FIRST SHOTS OF WORLD WAR II

Number 65

This special issue is dedicated to the Editor's lifelong friend CHRISTOPHER STEVENS who died July 10, 1989 without whose help with issue No. 1 *After the Battle* might never have been.

NUMBER 65

Edited by Winston G. Ramsey

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Front Cover: Danzig then and now. The first shots of the Second World War were fired by the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* at the Polish garrison on Westerplatte — the peninsula at the mouth of the Port Canal.

Centre Pages: The crumbling ruin of the barracks from where Major Henryk Sucharski conducted the heroic seven-day defence against combined German land, sea and air forces.

Back Cover: The Westerplatte memorial unveiled in 1966.

Acknowlegements: The Editor extends his grateful thanks to Mrs Stanislawa Gornikiewicz in Gdansk for her advice, assistance — and generous hospitality — without which the production of this issue would not have been possible. Our appreciation is also given to Jan Polak, Administration Director of Sea-Trading Harbour, Gdansk, for granting us permission to photograph within the docks area.

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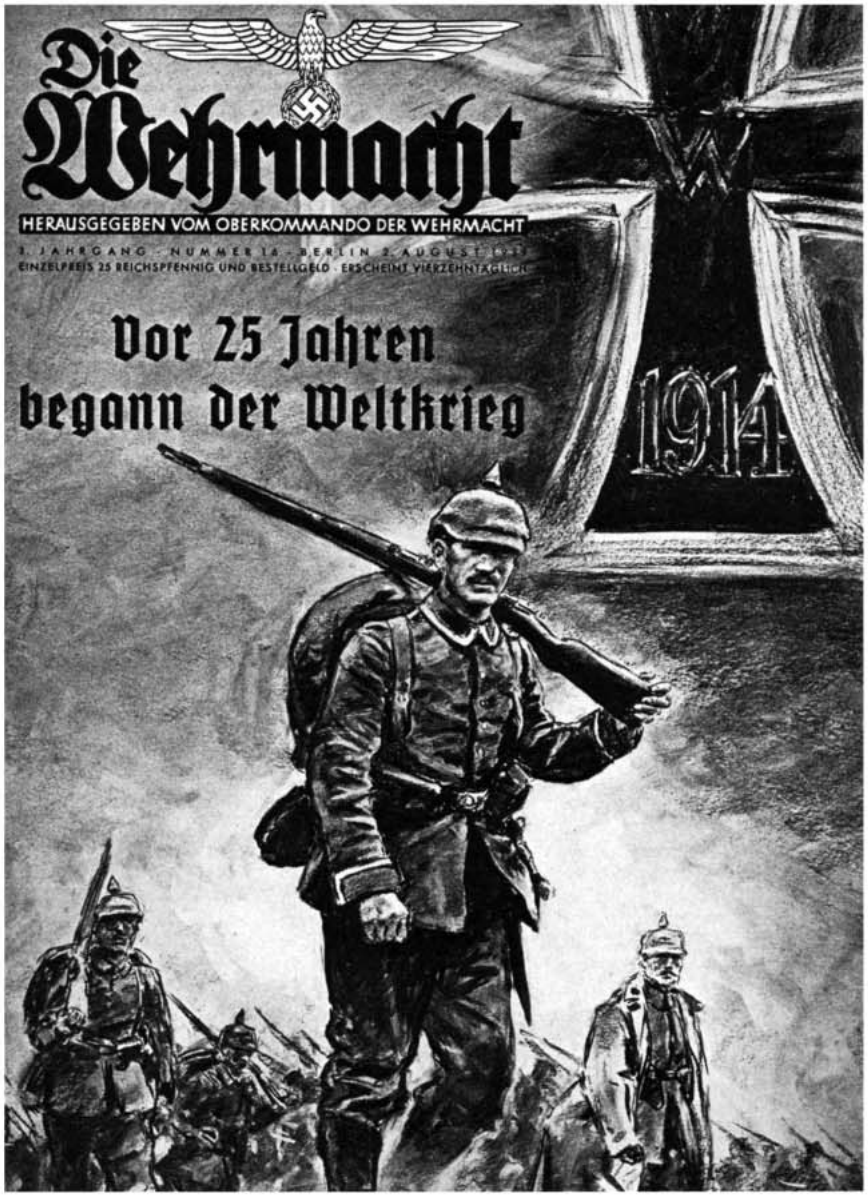
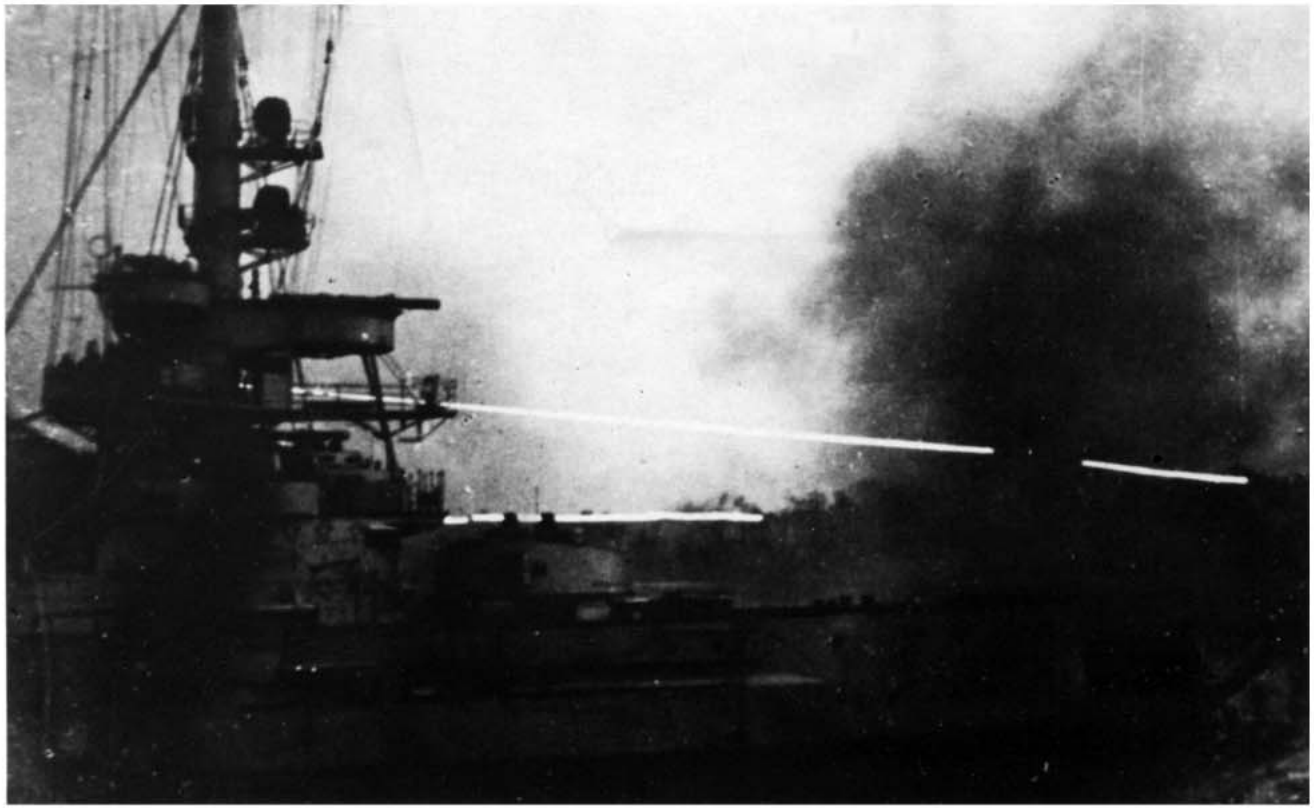


In 1914 the Great War began with the first shots being fired on the Eastern Front on August 1 following Germany's declaration of war against Russia. Three days later Britain declared war on Germany. Twenty-five years later, in remarkably similar circumstances following a pre-emptive German attack on the Eastern Front against Poland on September 1, Britain declared war on the third day. In August 1939 Danzig held the world's attention; now fifty years later *After the Battle* has returned to the place where the first shots were fired — Westerplatte. In September 1939, the heroic defence of Poland's besieged military base in Danzig, against overwhelming odds including a German battleship, was referred to as a 'second Spanish Alcazar'. For seven days the 200-man garrison held out against everything that German land, sea and air forces could throw at it. Marshal Rydz-Smigly, commander of Poland's armed forces, broadcast from Warsaw: 'Soldiers of the Westerplatte, fight. You are fighting the fight of Poland. Poland watches your gallant struggle with pride. Fight for Poland to the last man.'



50 years ago . . .

THE NIGHT of August 31, 1939 is warm, dark and rather humid. At Danzig a soft breeze is blowing, full of the fresh smell of the sea, mingling with a strong scent of trees. The sea is exceptionally calm and the whole of Westerplatte is deathly silent. In normal circumstances, it could be just another beautiful summer night. This time, however, the stillness is threatening.

The sentries, look-outs and patrols, working their way around the positions in complete darkness, report observations which bring the garrison to an even higher degree of alertness. The usually busy Port Canal seems to be deserted. The German Schutzpolizei sentry at the entrance gate to Westerplatte is replaced by an army patrol. The police boats, armed and manned by military personnel, are racing along the canal. In New Port the quiet evacuation of civilians is under way.

Slowly and silently a white mist from the canal is spreading over the peninsula, filling the hollows. To the east the sky is becoming lighter with every minute. The first birds begin to twitter. Gradually the eye can pick out individual objects in the foreground. The new day of September 1, 1939 is beginning.

Everything indicates that the day will be hot and sunny. The Polish soldiers, manning their battle stations since last evening, look at the first signs of dawn with a feeling of relief that one more night has passed in peace. Although they can hardly keep their eyes open and their fingers resting on the triggers of ready loaded rifles and machine guns are cold and stiff, they know that they will soon be relieved and able to return to barracks.

Suddenly, the stillness is broken by a single shot. The time is 4.15 a.m. The weapons already taken off the firing positions are hurriedly put back and made ready. For nearly half an hour they remain alert and, when at last they are ordered to leave, the air and earth seem to explode in one gigantic roar. The fieldworks and surrounding trees appear to be lifted skywards and then pushed down again, like a boat in rough seas. The tracer ammunition fired by the enemy in New Port forms a colourful, vibrating canopy over the heads of the Polish defenders. It is 4.47 a.m.

I wonder if any of the *Schleswig-Holstein*'s gunners realised, at that moment, that those first shots opened the way for countless, even more terrifying exchanges bringing death, destruction, terror and misery to millions of people. The Second World War had begun.

WIKTOR KUROWSKI, AUGUST 1989

WESTERPLATTE

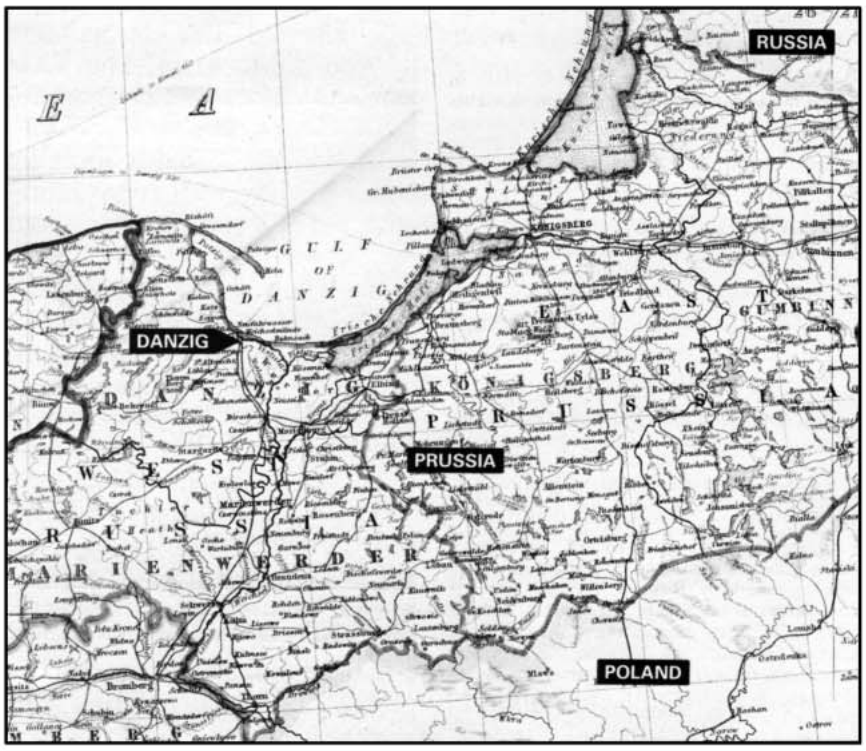
BY WIKTOR KUROWSKI

To write about Westerplatte separately from Danzig is, from a factual and historical point of view, impossible. Today the name of Gdansk draws from time to time the attention of the whole world as the place where in 1980 Solidarity was born. Fifty years ago Danzig (its German name) had become the focus of world opinion, standing one step away from the most bloody and brutal war mankind had ever known.

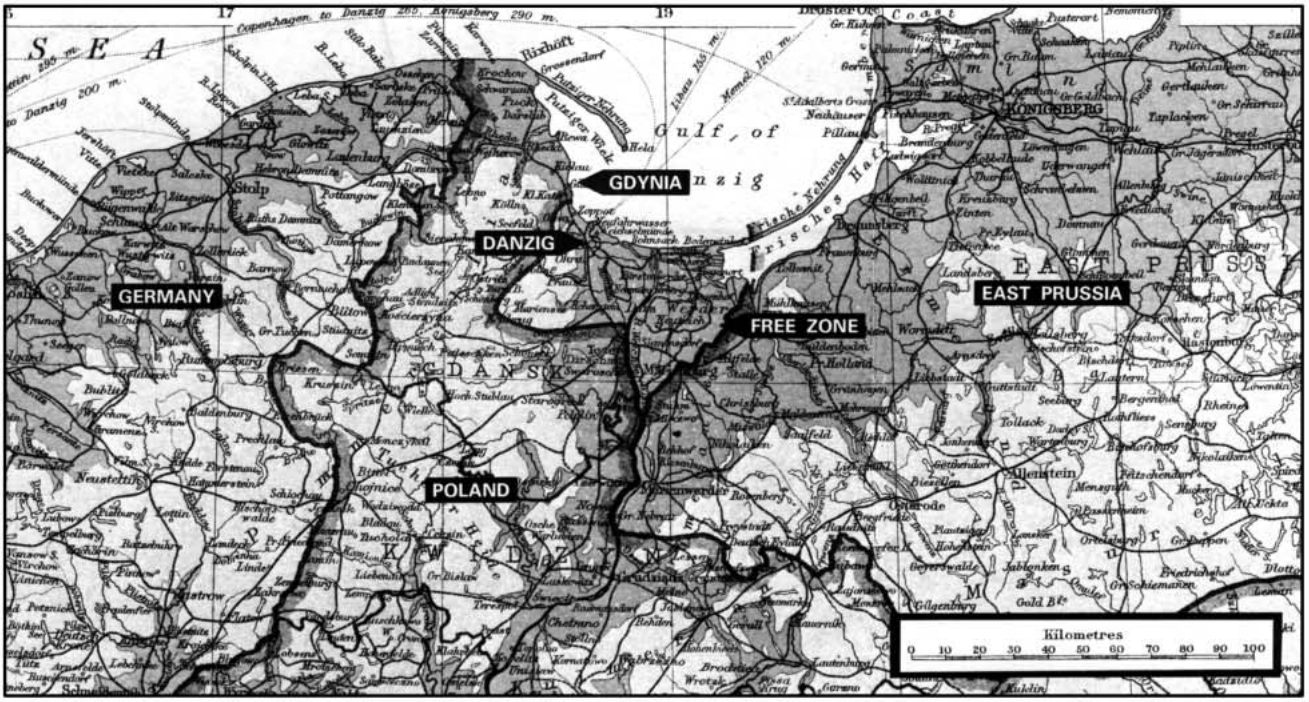
In 1939, the Nazi propaganda machine had tried to convince the German people and the rest of the world in believing that the 'Free City of Danzig' was a German city, that it was always German and should be returned to the German 'Vaterland'. Forty-four years on from the end of the Second World War, a casual visitor without an intimate knowledge of the past, taking a stroll through Gdansk, could hardly imagine that within living memory the very same streets witnessed Nazi flags, slogans, marching columns of SS and SA formations and cheering crowds.

The beginning of Gdansk goes well back into the past even before the first historical evidence of its existence is available. We know that by 997 it was already a fishing and commercial centre; a seat of the East Pomeranian rulers who, for most of the time, recognised Polish sovereignty.

In the 11th century it is mentioned in the Latin chronicle of *The Life of St Adalbert* as 'Urbs Gyddanyzc'. In 1235 Gdansk obtained its charter and it was given municipal autonomy 25 years later. By the end of the 13th century, Gdansk was inhabited by 8,000 people and the harbour and town were growing fast in size and prosperity. Situated at the mouth of the main Polish river, the Vistula, and thus supported by the natural hinterland of the Polish kingdom, Gdansk was ideally situated to become one of the main trading ports of Europe.



A map from the 1860s when Danzig belonged to Prussia. By this time the Free City had been cut off from Poland proper for some 50 years by the 'Prussian Corridor'.



Sixty years later the positions were reversed and it was Poland which now had a 'corridor' to the Baltic at the expense of splitting East Prussia from Germany. The redrawing of the boundaries in Eastern Europe after the First World War led to discontent on both sides. Although the Free City of Danzig had been re-created on paper, the Poles were still subservient to the local legislature which was German-dominated and this forced Poland to develop a rival port on her own territory at Gdynia (Gotenhafen). For her part, Germany was equally annoyed about her loss of unrestricted access to East Prussia.

Yet this natural development was interrupted by the Order of the Teutonic Knights. They occupied Gdansk in 1308 and slaughtered the Polish garrison whereupon the Pomeranian princes castle was converted into one of the headquarters of the Order. German settlers were brought in who in 1343 erected to the south of the original Old Town a new settlement named 'Main Town'. In 1375 the Old Town, occupied mostly by Poles, received its Charter for a second time, while the Main Town became a member of the Hanseatic League. In 1380, the Teutonic Knights had enlarged it by adding a new part called 'New Town'.

After the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, in which the expansion of the Teutonic Knights had been checked at last by combined Polish and Lithuanian forces, Gdansk paid homage to the Polish king. Later it joined the Confederation of Prussian Towns which gave rise to the so-called 'Thirteen Years War' between 1454 and 1466. It was then that the Teutonic Knights' castle and the New Town were razed to the ground by the people of Gdansk. Following the war Gdansk returned to Poland under King Casimir IV, becoming one of the largest and richest harbour towns in Europe.

Its popularity and prosperity were derived from trade privileges bestowed upon it by the Polish kingdom so that during the Swedish invasion of Poland between 1655 and 1660, Gdansk remained faithful to its King and the town did not fall into the invader's hands. In 1734 it offered refuge to the Polish king, Stanislaus Leszczynski and repelled a long siege by Russian troops. In 1793, as a result of the second partition of Poland, Gdansk was annexed to Prussia, despite popular resistance. During the Napoleonic period, 1807 to 1815, it became known as the 'Free City of Gdansk', but because it was separated from Poland by a Prussian 'corridor' to the sea, its economy fell into decline. The city appealed for reunification with Poland but when the Congress of Vienna upheld the division of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia, Gdansk was relegated to the province of West Prussia.

From 1815 to the end of the First World War it continued to belong to Prussia — one hundred years of Prussian rule strengthening its ties and influence with Germany.

Hitler used what he called the 'Diktat' of Versailles as one of his main political platforms for the reunification of the two portions of Germany in which the succession of Danzig and the creation of the Polish corridor was the focus of attention in the run-up to the war.

The Free City of Danzig

On June 28, 1919 — seventy years ago, in the Hall of Mirrors at the Château de Versailles — the treaty signed by Germany was the seed-bed which was to lead to another world war twenty years later. Apart from onerous provisions, conditions and guarantees directed against Germany, the distribution of parts of her territory, both at home and overseas, amongst the victors as spoils of war led to immediate quarrels between the Allies. The creation, or rather re-creation, of the Free Port of Danzig was partly due to the rivalry between Britain and France, the former seeking to protect some of Germany's interests to help check the position of France as the main European power.

Article (ii) of the Treaty of Versailles included the outright cession of most of West Prussia to Poland and the creation of an access to the Baltic at Danzig. The 'Free City of Danzig' was officially declared on November 15, 1920 and, by international law, it was put under the protection and jurisdiction of the League of Nations. The League nominated its High Commissioner with a seat in Danzig, the cost of his office being equally divided between Poland and the Free City.

Legal relations between the two sides had first been determined by the Paris Convention on November 9, 1919, and were furthered by the so-called Warsaw Resolution of October 24, 1921. Polish interests were represented by the Commissioner General of the Polish Republic, the highest Polish authority with a seat in the city.

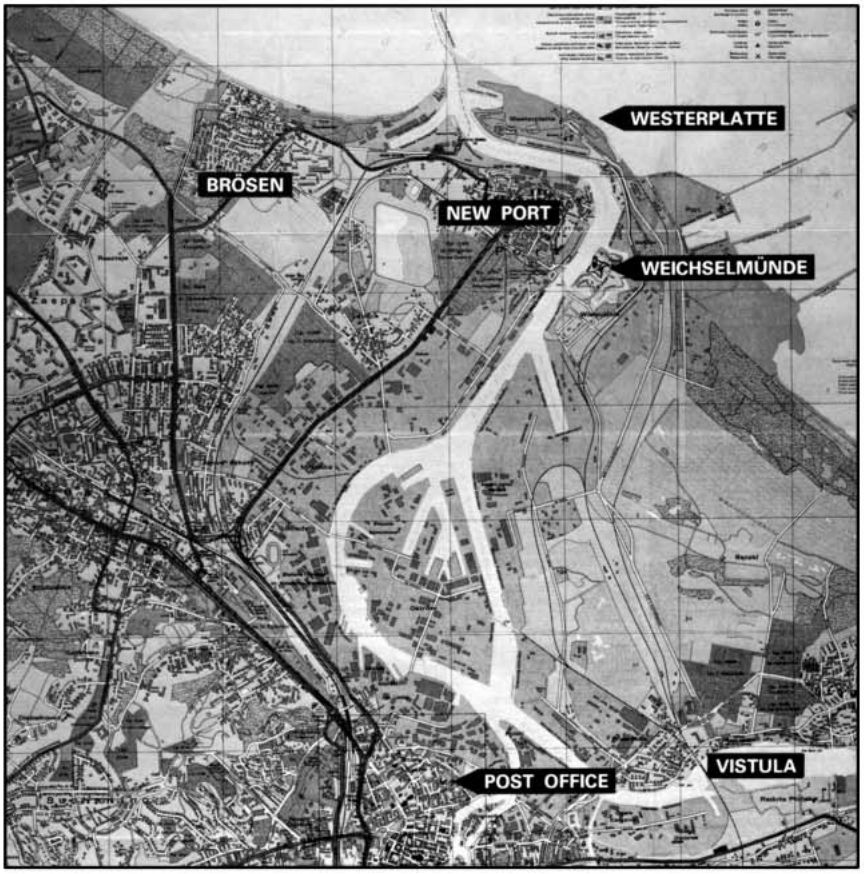
To satisfy Poland's needs and to secure her sea trade, the Paris Convention determined her rights to use Danzig harbour facilities at any time for the import and export of goods. Under the Warsaw Resolution, the 'Free City' was finally incorporated into the Polish customs zone. Poland was made responsible for the foreign affairs of the city and the management of its rail services. From January 1, 1922, it obtained the right to establish

its own independent telephone and telegraphic facilities, followed by the same arrangement for postal services on January 5, 1925, likewise within harbour limits.

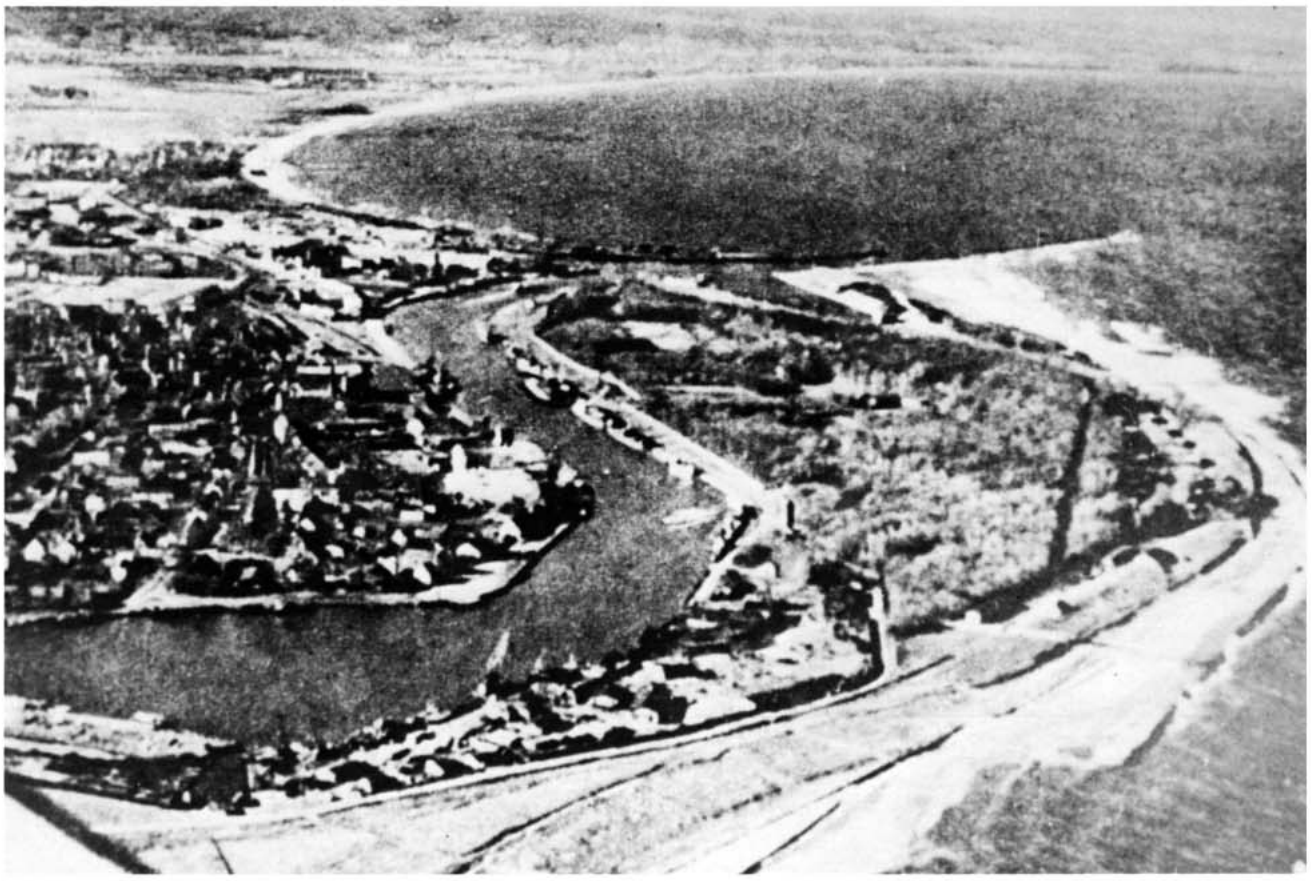
Any dispute between Poland and Danzig was to be settled in the first instance by the High Commissioner in the city and thereafter by the Council of the League of Nations, the highest prevailing authority. Amongst many other functions, the High Commissioner was accountable for the proper observation of the 'Free City Constitution', which had been decreed on August 11, 1920 and ratified soon afterwards by the League of Nations. The executive power was in the hands of the Senate headed by a President, the legislative rôle being performed by the Volkstag consisting of 72 members.

The 'Free City of Danzig' comprising two urban and three rural districts made up an area of over 700 square miles with a population in 1929 of 407,000. The Polish minority represented between 5 and 10 percent, most of the Poles being citizens of Danzig. (The actual harbour was administered by another international body called the 'Harbour and Waterways Council' (HWC), consisting of five Polish and five Free City delegates under a neutral chairman. The cost of maintaining the port and income from it was equally distributed between both sides.)

When the German-dominated legislature in the city prevented the Poles from using the port, Poland turned to nearby Gdynia as an alternative which was built up from 1924 into a major new port, surpassing eventually its rival Danzig. Thereafter, however, were nurtured the seeds of discontent. The Poles were greatly annoyed over the obstructions created in the 'Free Port' by the Germans, yet Germany was equally irritated by the physical separation of Danzig from Germany proper. After 1933 it thus became a political hot potato, a ready-made excuse for Hitler's next move against Poland.



Today Danzig — under its Polish name of Gdansk — conjures up a completely different picture, but even in the 1980s the city still retains the world's attention, albeit for entirely different reasons.



Taken some time before 1939, this aerial view shows the Gulf of Danzig with, in the foreground, the spit of land comprising the strategic Westerplatte peninsula controlling the canal from the River Vistula to the Baltic.

Above: **The Port Canal looking east. Westerplatte lies on the left, the white line marking the position of the red-brick southern boundary wall for the new Military Transit Depot that the League of Nations permitted Poland to establish there in 1924. (All contemporary photographs courtesy Mrs Stanislawa Gornikiewicz of Gdansk.)**

Westerplatte

For centuries the sands carried by the Vistula and the sea had been deposited at the river mouth, gradually creating two separate sand banks. The one on the west of the river was named by the German cartographers in the first half of the 17th century as West-Platte, the other, to the east, Ost-Platte. In the course of time these names changed to Westerplatte and Osterplatte respectively.

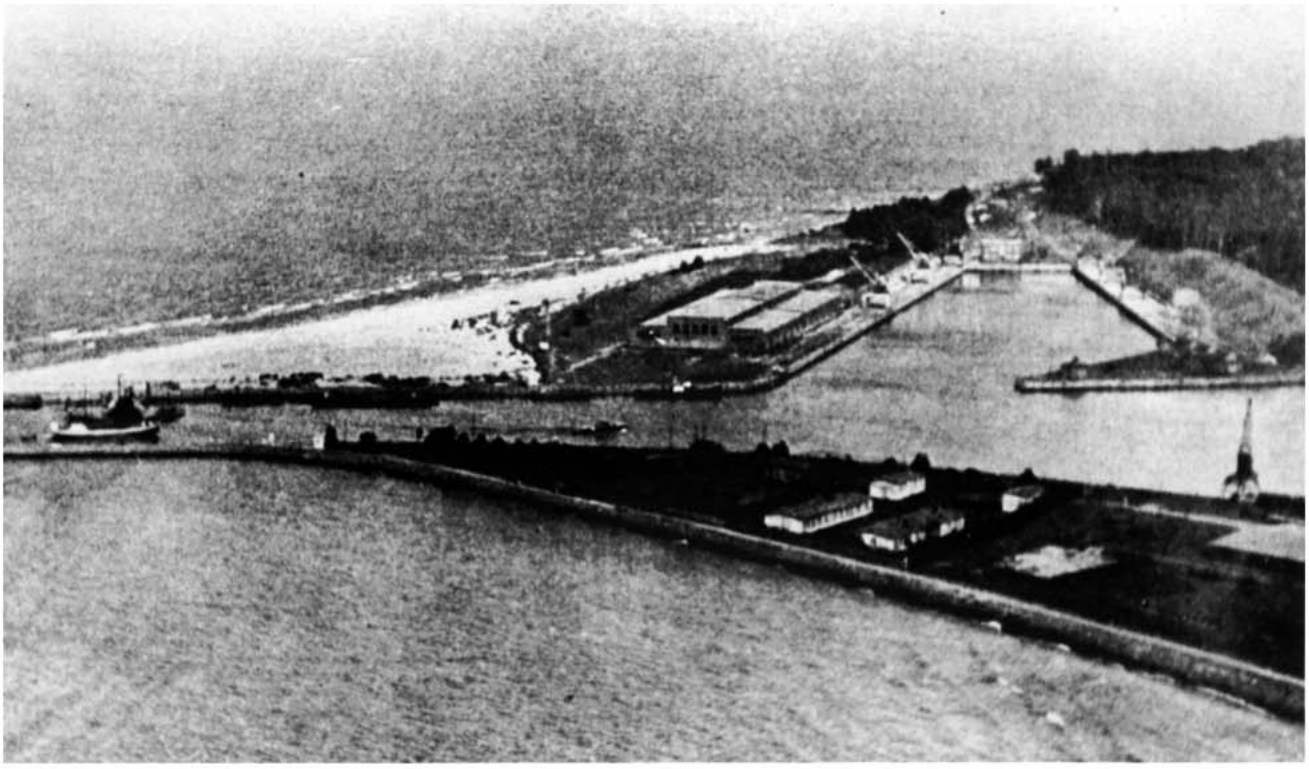
By the end of the century there were already two distinct waterways formed around those sand banks leading to the harbour. While the eastern branch was increasingly silted up by the sands and slime, throughout the 18th century the western one was gaining in importance as an altogether better navigable waterway. In 1840 a new rivermouth was formed further to the east, and the old western section remained as the only waterway connecting the harbour with the Baltic. It was named the Neues Fahrwasser (New Water Way), and Westerplatte became a sandy peninsula. On the southern bank the Neufahrwasser (New Port) was developed.

Topographically, Westerplatte is a beach about 1300 metres long and 500 metres across; approximately 200 metres wide at the base where it connects with the land. Most of the area is wooded and projects some three to four metres above sea level.

In 1734 the French had landed here in support of the Polish king, and again in 1807 French and Polish units used Westerplatte as a base from where they delivered a successful assault on Gdansk, occupied at this time by the Russians.

In the early 1900s, a company named Weichsel (Vistula) had been formed which developed Westerplatte into a holiday resort and health centre. In 1910 it was bought by Rudolf Lettau who in turn sold it in 1919 for a million marks to the Polish-owned Bank of Earning Companies Union. Then on March 11, 1922, the International Commission called upon to regulate the property of former Imperial Germany, gave the northern part of Westerplatte to the HWC and the Free City, leaving Poland with only a small piece of the peninsula.

In the 1960s the canal was widened by some 200 feet at the expense of Westerplatte's southern bank.



The Military Transit Depot

The Military Transit Depot included the construction of the Ammunition Basin on the western end of the peninsula for the unloading of supplies destined for Poland. The depot was intended to be a secure area for the temporary stockpiling of munitions, and the construction of actual fortifications was prohibited.

In June 1921, the Council of the League of Nations decreed to Poland the right of transhipment and the storing of military goods in Danzig harbour, the actual location being left for the HWC to determine. In April 1922, the High Commissioner decided that the stockpiling of ammunition had to be done in the northern area of the Port Canal and, although not naming the place, it was obvious that he meant Westerplatte. At that time, the Free City transferred the ownership of the peninsula into the hands of the HWC which, in turn, agreed to hand over 60 hectares to Poland as a leasehold, free of charge for an unlimited period, but without extra-territorial rights.

On March 14, 1924, the Council of the League of Nations issued a decree for Poland's right to establish a 'Military Transit Depot' on Westerplatte. The HWC was made responsible for the construction of a special ammunition basin and 19 shelters. All works were to be completed by the middle of 1925 and the cost equally divided between Poland and the Free City. The installations were actually handed over on October 31, 1925.

The boundary of the Military Transit Depot ran in the north along the coast up to the Eastern Pier at the entrance to the Port Canal then, keeping some distance away, proceeded along the canal to turn in front of the HWC workshops back towards the sea again and crossing the railway line on the way. Around that time the famous red brick wall — the Roten Mauer — was erected fencing off the southern and south-eastern boundary of the Depot.

On December 9, 1925, the Council of the League of Nations determined the strength of the Polish garrison as 88 men comprising 2 officers, 20 NCOs and 66 other ranks. In special circumstances, Poland had the right to increase the number of men. The garrison's duties were regulated by the Polish Army regulations and it was not allowed to build fortifications.

In August 1928, a new agreement was reached which, besides relinquishing management of the ammunition basin (taken over by the HWC), divided Westerplatte into three zones of different legal standing. Zone A, containing the area round the ammunition basin, was put under HWC jurisdiction. Zone C, covering the railway line from the basin all the way to the railway gate in the brick wall, passed under the supervision of the Danzig police (the German Schutzpolizei or Schupo for short), while Zone B covered the rest of the territory and was left for the sole use of the Polish authorities. As a result of these new arrangements, the western part of the Military Transit Zone was enclosed from Zone A by a barbed wire fence and the railway track was surrounded on both sides by a similar fence.

To help protect Westerplatte from attack, four guardrooms were built along the boundary wall. Only two were occupied by the Danzig police: one at the entrance gate, the other near the ammunition basin, both used by the Germans for continuous surveillance of all activities on the Polish side of the wall.

Later, Free City rights were extended further to include right of access to Westerplatte by the President and the deputy of Danzig police.

Karel Margry accompanied Wiktor Kurowski on his trip to Westerplatte in April 1989 — specially timed to miss the snows but before foliage made photography of the remains difficult. However they found that the Ammunition Basin is now within a restricted military area with no possibility of photography. This picture shows the dockside some time before the jetty in the distance was cut away to improve access. From 1928 management of the Basin was devolved onto the Harbour and Waterways Council (HWC) at which time Westerplatte was sub-divided into three zones.

Earth embankments protected the ammunition storage shelters — these three being situated beside the railway track on the north-eastern perimeter facing the sea (see map overleaf).

Karel found the picture had been taken looking south-east towards the railway gate. Today both shelters and track have gone and here even the mound has been dug away.

Preparations for Defence

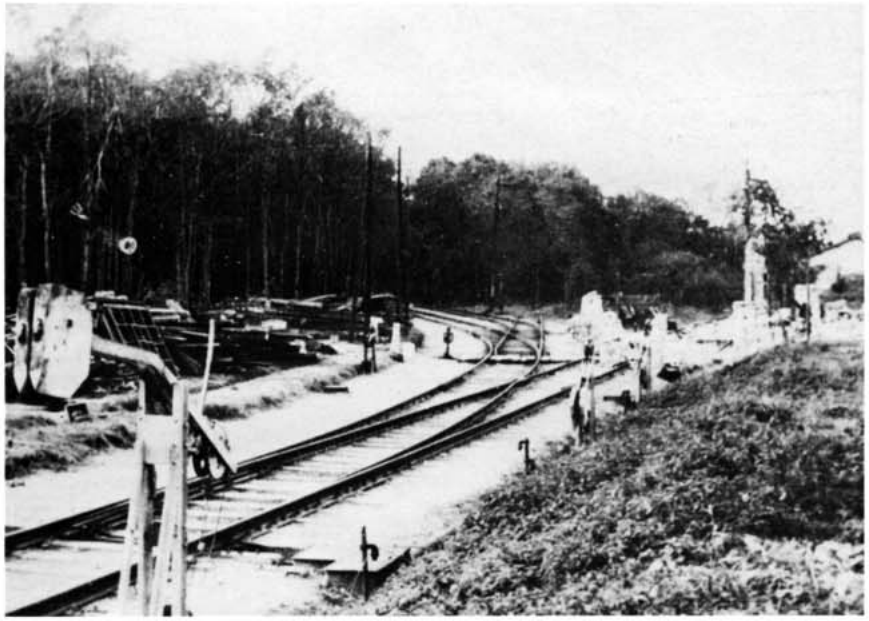
Several months after Hitler gained power in Germany, a decision had been taken by the Polish General Staff to prepare Westerplatte for a possible sudden attack by Nazi paramilitary formations. However, full defensive measures against well-prepared naval and army action were not contemplated at the time. The notion of defence and, derived from that, the construction of strongholds, was the result of many conferences and discussions between relevant departments within the Polish High Command. It was based on the following tactical assumptions:

1. The main German attack would be delivered from a land base on the peninsula in the east.
2. Secondary assaults could be expected from the direction of the ammunition basin under the cover of buildings and embankments.
3. The canal to the south, acting as a water barrier, would not represent a particular danger. The high buildings on the opposite bank, however, offered perfect observation platforms which would provide any attacker with an excellent view into Westerplatte.
4. The sandy beach to the north was accepted as safe and, if the worst happened, would allow for the evacuation of the besieged garrison by the Polish Navy.

Taking into account the tactical requirements, the overall plan of defence had been established. It was based on a number of existing and planned strongholds or guardrooms forming a ring around a centrally placed barracks. All the guardrooms were linked together with a very well organised system of machine gun cross-fire. The barracks would provide a shelter for the garrison during bombardment and support the perimeter positions with machine gun fire where necessary.

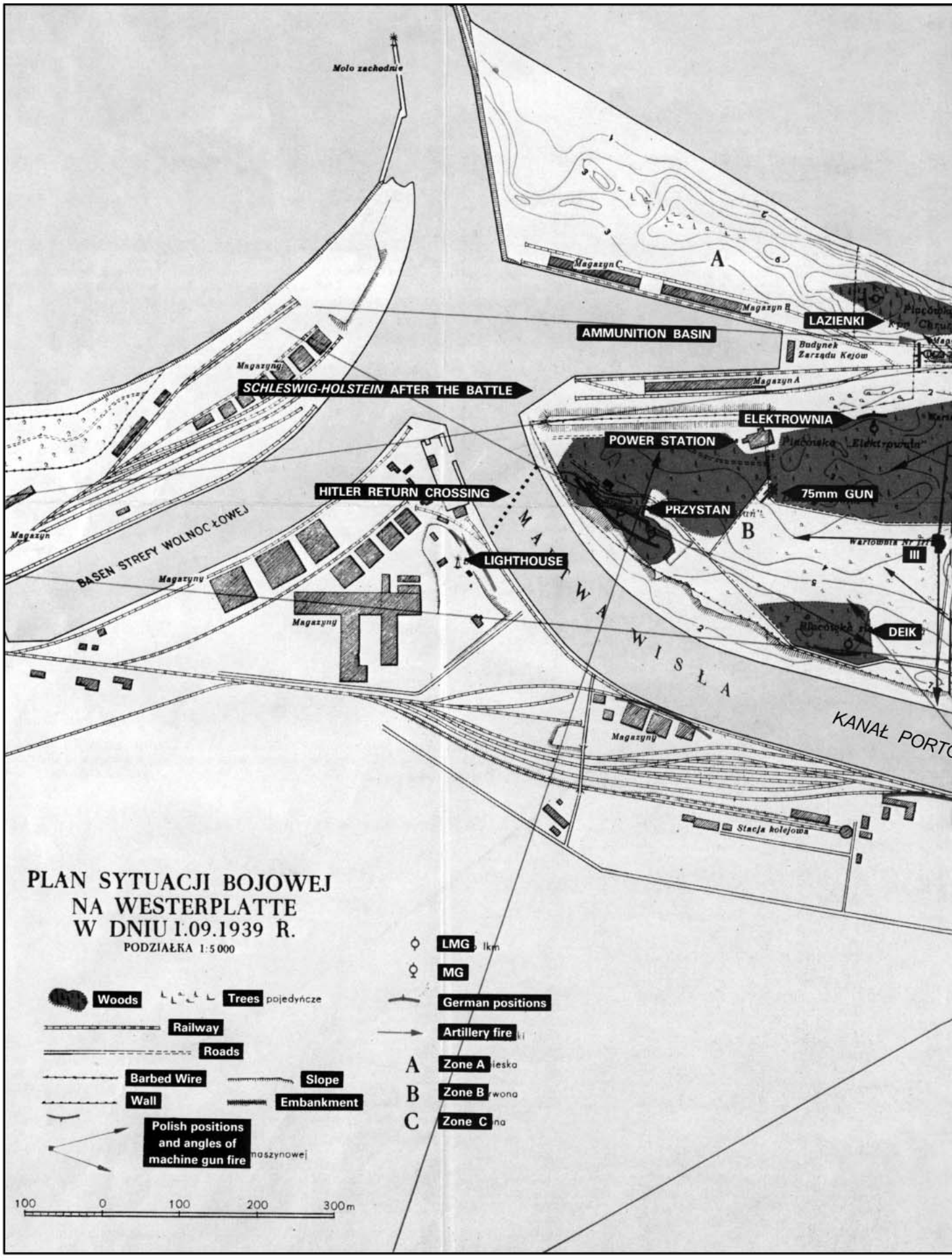
Due to the persuasive zeal of the Commissioner of the Polish Republic at that time, Kazimierz Pappe, the High Commissioner of the League of Nations, with the approval of the Free City, gave permission to build the new barracks and one guardroom. The construction of the remaining guardrooms was carried out by the Poles without any official authorisation.

Four guardrooms, numbered I, II, IV and V, were the first to be built. Guardroom III was an existing building occupied by NCOs but was provided with a reinforced basement. From outside, the guardrooms looked nothing unusual. They were, however, constructed in two parts on different levels. The upper part was the actual guardroom of varying dimensions. For example Guardroom I was approximately seven metres square and raised slightly above ground



Looking from the railway gate towards the interior of the Transit Depot. The shelters are down the track to the right while the branch lines on the left rejoin it and all end up at the Ammunition Basin.

Although the ruins of the railway station visible on the right of the wartime photo have since been cleared, a concrete platform still remains to mark the spot.


Molo zachodnie
Magazyn C
A
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LAZIENKI
AMMUNITION BASIN
Budynek Zarządu Kejow
Magazyny
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN AFTER THE BATTLE
Magazyn A
ELEKTROWNIA
POWER STATION
HITLER RETURN CROSSING
75mm GUN
PRZYSTAN
B
Magazyn
BASEN STREFY WOLNOCŁOWEJ
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III
Magazyny
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MARTWA WISŁA
KANAŁ PORTO
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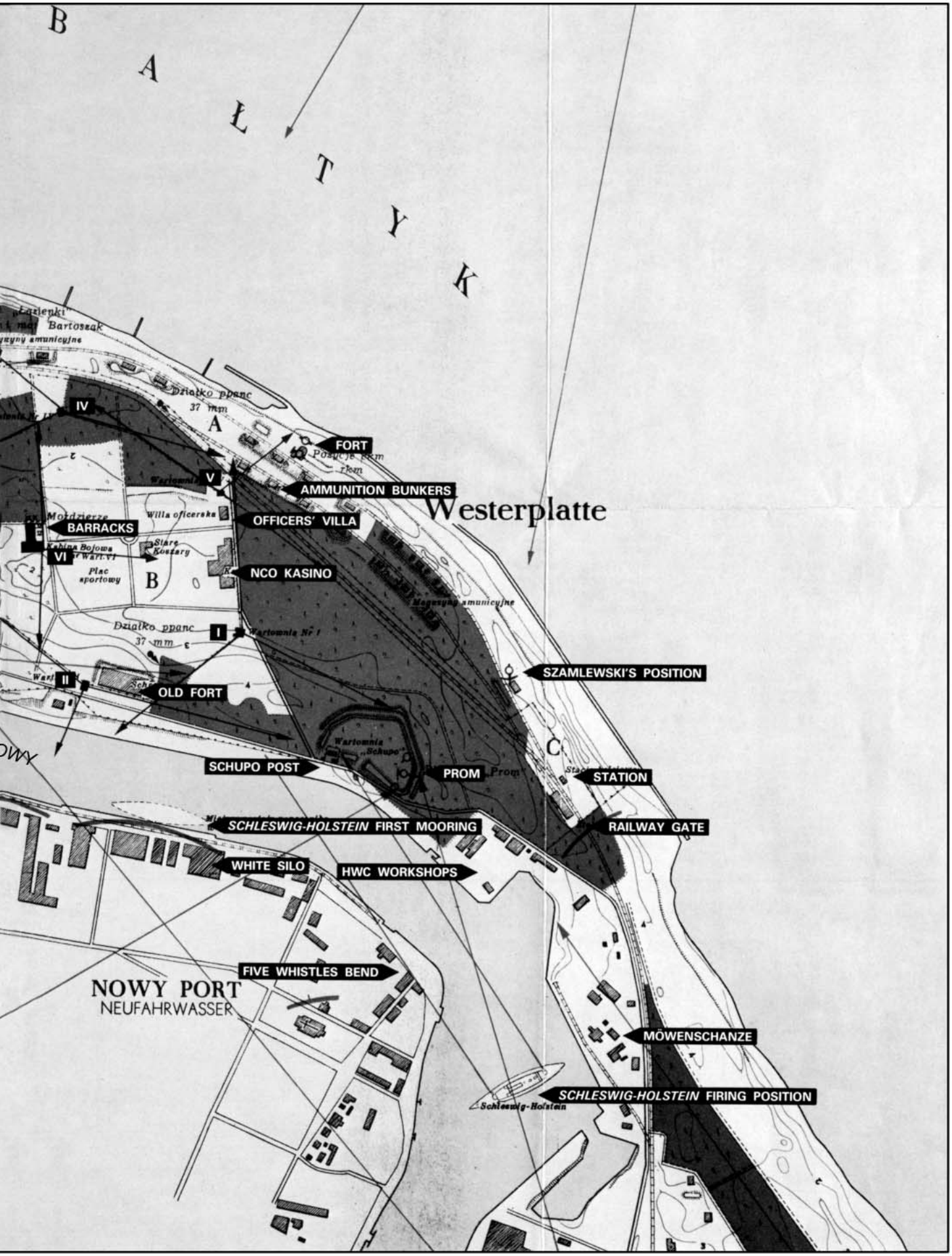
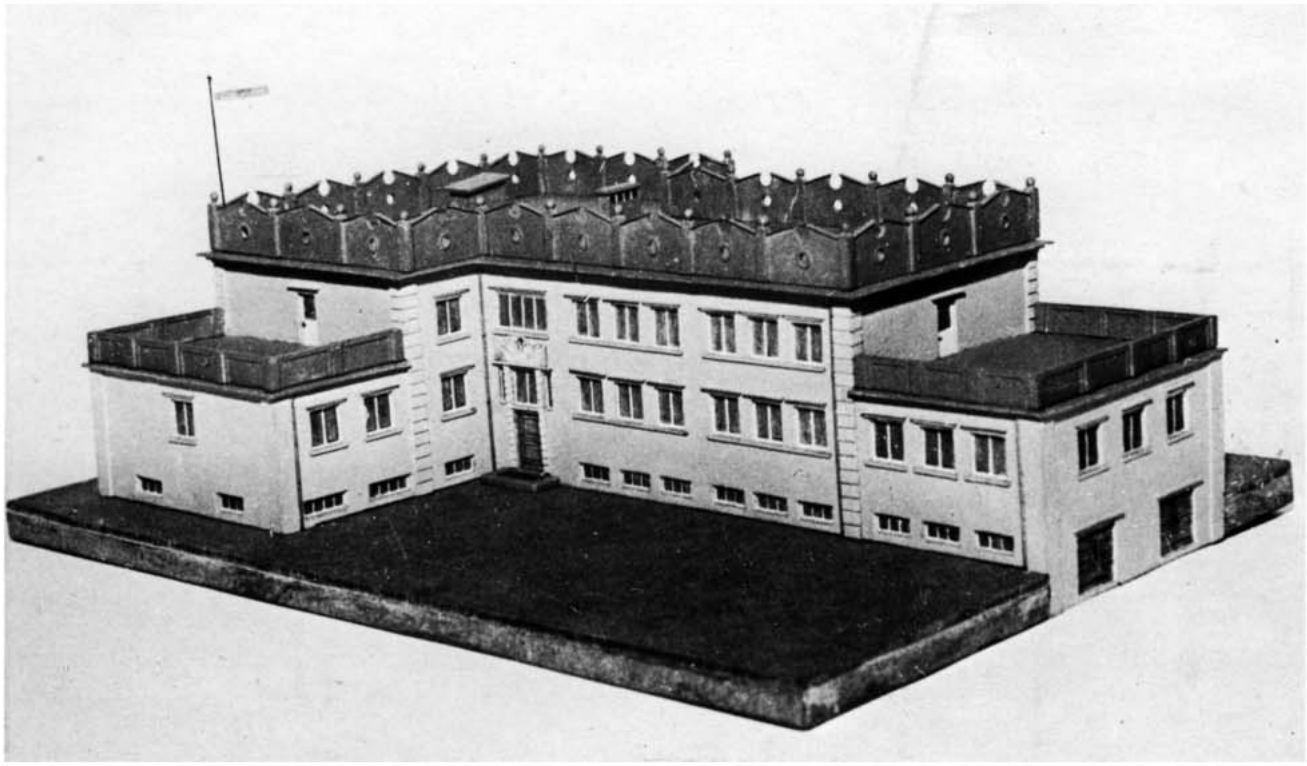
Stacja kolejowa
PLAN SYTUACJI BOJOWEJ
NA WESTERPLATTE
W DNIU 1.09.1939 R.
PODZIAŁKA 1:5 000
Woods
Trees pojedyńcze
Railway
Roads
Barbed Wire
Slope
Wall
Embankment
Polish positions and angles of machine gun fire
LMG
MG
German positions
Artillery fire
A Zone A
B Zone B
C Zone C
100 0 100 200 300 m


BAŁTYK
Westerplatte
IV
V
VI
I
II
FORT
AMMUNITION BUNKERS
OFFICERS' VILLA
BARRACKS
NCO KASINO
OLD FORT
SZAMLEWSKI'S POSITION
SCHUPO POST
PROM
STATION
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN FIRST MOORING
RAILWAY GATE
WHITE SILO
HWC WORKSHOPS
FIVE WHISTLES BEND
NOWY PORT
NEUFAHRWASSER
MÖWENSCHANZE
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN FIRING POSITION
Działko ppanc 37 mm
Magazyny amunicyjne
Plac sportowy
Schleswig-Holstein



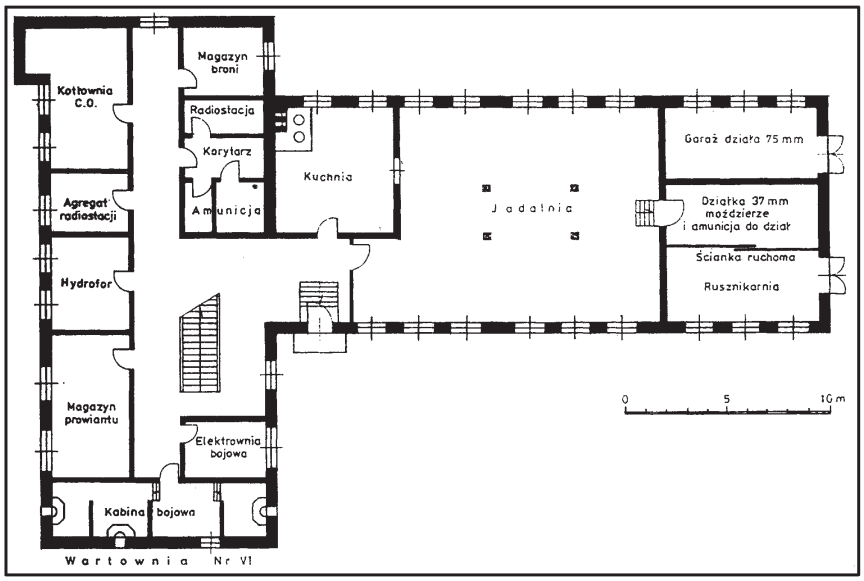
Ostensibly, fortifications were not permitted, but the Polish authorities managed to persuade the League to give permission for new quarters for the garrison to be built. This was centrally located and built more along fortress lines than an ordinary barracks. The building was designed in the shape of an irregular letter 'T' and angled with its transverse part parallel to the canal, thus providing a shielded dead field from the city. Machine gun positions were also provided at ground level.

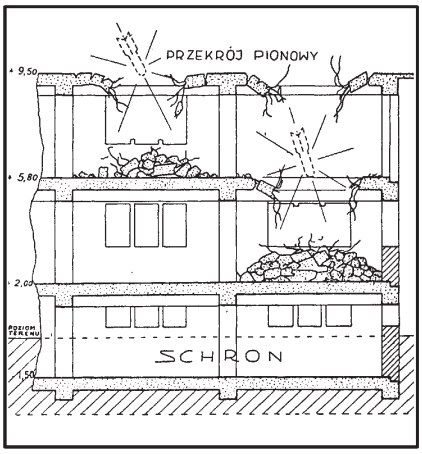
level. The walls were 350mm brickwork, the floors made up of RSJs and pre-cast concrete slabs. Roofs comprised metal sheeting on timber joists with felting. The windows provided for firing from a standing position and were equipped with mountings for light machine guns. These LMGs could fire in almost any direction, giving protection against attackers who managed to penetrate the cross-fire of the machine guns.

The lower level of Guardroom I, 2 metres by 1.5 metres with 2 metres headroom, was constructed of reinforced concrete with 500-600mm walls. There were two or three MK30 machine guns in fixed positions. They could fire on pre-arranged lines alongside the barbed wire obstacles. Each guardroom was connected to its sub-basement by a well-concealed trap door. Up until March 1939, only officers and some NCOs knew the underground locations. All the apertures were well camouflaged so as to look from the outside like ventilation louvres.

By 1934 all the guardrooms were completed. Due to the high water table, the sub-basements were very damp — not ideal conditions for weapons and ammunition. To prevent condensation, portable fires were used and the machine guns were kept constantly clean and oiled. Ammunition was stored in specially made zinc boxes with airtight covers, containing about 3,000 rounds in cartridge belts. In the guardrooms, the LMGs, the ammunition, hand-grenades, Very pistols and flares, were kept in large wooden chests used as benches. Another problem was that there were no facilities for testing the guns to check their condition.

The construction of the barracks began in the late autumn of 1934, and was finished in late 1935. This consisted of a three-storey building, located in the centre of the defensive perimeter. The framework and the sub-basement were made of reinforced concrete, the walls being of the same brick construction as used in the guardrooms. The roof and first floors were designed to absorb, by their destruction, the explosive energy of any bombs and shells. The sub-basement ceiling, about 400mm thick, was designed to take the impact and weight of falling lumps of concrete which, in turn, protected it from further destruction by making the shells explode earlier before hitting it. The building was shaped like an irregular letter 'T' with the transverse part parallel to the canal. This shape gave cover to the main entrance and soldiers' quarters from fire from New Port and created a dead field for German observers. Guardroom VI also formed part of the basement.





The floors were specially constructed to absorb the impact of bombs and the basement was designed as the main command post and location of Guardroom VI.

As it was obvious that some measure of overall security for the depot was necessary, five 'guardrooms' were constructed. To the casual observer they were haphazardly dotted around the area, but in reality they were very carefully sited in a ring around the barracks with secret machine gun posts concealed in their semi-sunk basements. *Above:* **Guardhouse III was actually an existing villa with its basement reinforced and converted.** *Below:* **Although no longer standing, the block-house foundations still remain. In the background of both pictures can be seen the new barracks.**

This is the back of Guardhouse III as seen from the barracks although Karel comments that his comparison had to be taken from the ground floor because of the lack of a suitable staircase in the ruined building.

The four other guardhouses were specially constructed, all with sunken basements. The embrasures, almost at ground level, were hidden by shrubs and rose bushes and each building was angled to provide a deadly cross-fire (see map on pages 8 and 9). *Above:* **This is Guardhouse I pictured after the battle with the firing apertures** *(below)* **as they can be seen today.**

In its sub-basement were the command post, equipped with a telephone exchange, wireless station, first aid room, ammunition store, generator, boiler for the heating and ventilation system, kitchen and toilets. The ground and first floors were occupied by command offices and included sleeping quarters, medical ward, showers and lavatories.

All guardrooms and later field entrenchments, and even the look-outs on the more sensitive posts, were connected by underground telephone and alarm signal cables to the command post in the barracks. The alarm bell could be activated from any manned position and in a matter of seconds the whole garrison could be put on alert.

In the mid-1930s most of Westerplatte was overgrown with dense deciduous and coniferous trees, numerous shrubs, hazels, willows and nettles kept in a wild and natural state. Parallel with the building plan, attention was paid to landscaping. Gradually, lawns and flower beds appeared. Roses were planted in front of the guardrooms, providing natural camouflage for the machine gun apertures. In time, an orchard, vegetable garden, sports ground and tennis court had been added, thus creating the impression of a well-kept park. This overtly peaceable activity undoubtedly had the desired effect on German observers.

From 1938 the thinning of some of the wooded areas began, mainly in the foreground of Guardrooms I and V to improve their fields of fire. To prevent aircraft from the Danzig Aeroclub spotting the work, only the trees with the narrowest crowns were selected. The timber so cut was used in erecting anti-tank barriers and other fieldworks.

As the political situation worsened, preparations were stepped up. In 1938 two 37mm anti-tank guns were smuggled in and hidden in the armoury. In the spring of 1939 a dismantled 75mm field gun arrived and was assembled in a garage by naval specialists. This gun was intended to defend the garrison against an attack by an armoured train or tanks.

On the manpower front, the technical platoon was disbanded in 1934 and all the specialists transferred to the reserve list but immediately re-engaged as civilian employees. In this way the garrison could be increased by a proportional number of soldiers and, by the outbreak of hostilities, totalled some 200 men. To achieve this level without it becoming apparent to the Danzig police, Sunday outings were adopted. Civilian employees who lived outside Westerplatte put on army uniforms and kept their clothes in their suitcases. Once landed in Gdynia, they would change to appear as civilians returning home. In the meantime an equivalent number of soldiers were taken back in the evening to Westerplatte. In 1938 Major Henryk Sucharski, an experienced Army officer, became garrison commander.

In May 1939, work began to create field positions for outposts and lookouts. Their aim was to stop an attack, at least in the initial stages, as far away as possible from the guardrooms which constituted the main line of defence. It was also important to gain maximum time necessary to put the garrison on full alert. All digging and building work

Left: **The main gate to the Military Transit Depot. To try to keep a check on Polish comings and goings, the German Danzig police erected the Schupo (Schutzpolizei) Guardhouse right next to, but outside, the fortress.** *Right:* **Although no precise reference point remains, this is the location of the gate and police post.**

was carried out during the night in complete silence and all traces of it had to be properly camouflaged before dawn.

The most crucial position was that of Outpost Prom (Ferry), which faced the direction of an anticipated main German assault from the east. The chosen location for it was on raised ground left over from an old fort blown up during the First World War. Densely overgrown, with young coniferous trees and enclosed on three sides by a ditch and embankment, it was an obvious site for such a purpose and comprised a trench with three machine gun nests and two dugouts.

Between Prom and the railway line an anti-tank barrier was erected. Made from timber placed horizontally into spaces around the largest trees and interwoven with barbed wire, it was about four metres wide by three metres high and topped with turf and earth.

The second most important position was Outpost Przystan (Pier) located in the south-western corner of the peninsula. Its main task was to prevent the enemy from crossing the canal and to give support to others in beating off any attacks which could be launched from the side of the ammunition basin. Situated on the embankment and screened by dwarfish trees, it had an excellent field of fire towards the canal lighthouse and railway station in New Port.

In the old grove near the canal, half-way between Outpost Przystan and Guardroom II, another entrenchment was prepared for a single LMG and six men. It was called Outpost Deik, taken from the name of its commander. Their job was to keep an eye on the canal and possible machine gun positions in New Port. To protect Westerplatte from the west, two more positions were created. One called Elektrownia (Power Station), situated 100 metres to the right of the power station, was for one LMG and five soldiers, while the other, named Lazienki (Baths), was made up of two separate sites. The first was on the embankment of the last ammunition shelter, the second in a small grove on the coast. Their task was to keep at bay any attempt at landing from the sea.

The beach on the northern side of the peninsula was the most vulnerable area as it presented any attacker with the most obvious way to break into the defensive ring by pressing on along the coast to take Westerplatte from the rear. To try to prevent this, the Outpost Fort was established. It occupied an old concrete shelter dated 1911, with its machine guns emplaced on its roof and a nearby embankment.

On the verge of the wooded area between Outpost Power Plant and Guardroom III, a position for the 75mm field gun was prepared, angled towards New Port. It comprised the gun position and two associated dugouts, one for ammunition and the other a crew shelter. The four 81mm mortars were set up in the corner of the barracks where they were shielded from German observers, to cover the ground in front of Outposts Fort and Prom.

The 37mm anti-tank guns were positioned as follows: No. 1 Gun in the grove between Guardroom I and the old park to cover the entrance gate; No. 2 Gun on the railway track behind Outpost Fort, protecting the railway gate.

In addition to the fieldworks already described, the entire area of Westerplatte was defended with an extensive network of obstacles. The approaches from both east and west were covered with several rows of barbed wire fences intermingled with trip wires with double barbed wire entanglements running parallel to the red brick wall. All the guardrooms were ringed in a similar way and barbed wire knife rests stood ready to close all the gaps created by roads and railway tracks.

In addition to the guardhouses, field fortifications were surreptitiously constructed at night to cover various other angles of approach which might be vulnerable to an assault. Probably the most vital, not many yards from the water's edge, was Outpost Prom (Ferry). Unfortunately with the widening of the canal the actual position has been lost (but see page 50).

At the opposite end of Westerplatte, near the generating station, was Outpost Elektrownia (or Power Plant). It now lies off-limits, 'but', says Karel, 'the location of the old power house turned out to be very close to the fence separating the restricted area from the one open to the public so I stood next to the sign saying — in four languages — that photography was prohibited and took this perfect match.'

Major Henryk Sucharski, the garrison commander, pictured in front of the officers' mess on his nameday — July 13 — 1939.

The building stood between Guardhouse V (where the T-34 tank memorial now stands) and the NCO's Kasino.

Preparing for Aggression

The efforts to remove the obligations of the Versailles Treaty and to incorporate Danzig into the German Reich started almost from the first day of its existence as the Free City. Nevertheless up to 1933 Danzig politicians could not ignore the possibility of Allied enforcement and were compelled to accept Poland's presence in the city. However, the situation changed dramatically from the moment the Nazis took over in Germany. Now they were able to concentrate their energies on taking control of the Free City as well. The build-up of military force was not, as their propaganda suggested, to defend the city against the Poles but was part of a larger plan of aggression.

On October 10, 1938, a law was published which introduced the enlistment of Danzig citizens into the Security Force — the Danziger Heimwehr. Although this law did not contravene the constitution of the Free City, nevertheless the Polish Government, taking account of the international situation, delivered an official protest.

From the spring of 1939, these military preparations in the Free City were carried out quite openly. In the police barracks hundreds of young men were drilling and training in the use of modern weapons and equipment, and at the approaches to the city from the direction of the frontier with Poland, entrenchments, firing positions and barbed wire obstacles were set up.

On June 11, on Hitler's orders, the formation of the Danziger Landespolizei was announced. This unit became the mainstay of a planned larger formation named Brigade Eberhardt, derived from the name of its commanding officer, Generalmajor Friedrich Eberhardt who was detached there from the staff of I. Armeekorps in East Prussia. He arrived wearing civilian clothes to cover his true identity. The staff of the Brigade, which was assembled in a very short time, comprised mostly officers on the reserve list from around Danzig. However the command posts and instructors' functions were given to

Mounting the guard in 1939. On the left is the old barracks.

With war getting closer, Major Sucharski, on what must have been one of his countless inspection tours of the defences, is pictured with his 2 i/c Captain Franciszek Dabrowski, his dog

Eros and Mrs Sobocinski, wife of the Chief of the Military Department in Danzig, on top of Outpost Fort situated some 70 yards from the sea on the northern shore.

officers and NCOs of the regular army. The ranks were filled by young men from Danzig, mostly members of the local SS, SA and other paramilitary organisations. Besides them, large numbers of German Servicemen were smuggled in from Germany to raise the units to the required strength.

However it seemed there was no shortage of men. In the weekly report from the local branch of the Polish Military Intelligence to the General Staff, it was stated that in the period between August 20-26 around 800 German soldiers arrived in Danzig from East Prussia. The problem was to provide them with arms, ammunition, equipment, uniforms, etc. To avoid the eyes of Polish intelligence and other agents, most of the supply convoys moved in during the hours of darkness, using a variety of methods to camouflage their vehicles. Some of the war materials were loaded in Stettin (Szczecin) into merchant ships destined for Königsberg. On the pretext of engine failure they would sail into Danzig and unload their secret cargoes during the night. Also vehicles from East Prussia would make their way through roads sealed off under the pretence of roadworks in progress and as soon as darkness fell long columns of army lorries would roll westwards. All approach roads remained heavily protected.

In his report (No. 11 on July 10, 1939) to the Foreign Office, the British Consul-General stated that he had credible information that on the Bischofsberg (Biskupia Gorka), there were parked 30 army lorries, 8 anti-aircraft guns of 3-in calibre, 3 6-barrelled AA heavy machine guns and field kitchens, with approximately 500 men being drilled within an area enclosed by barbed wire fencing. There were other eye-witness accounts of artillery positions being prepared in Weichselmünde (Wisloujscie) and in Brösen (Brzezno). In the last weeks of peace, Danzig looked rather more like a fortress town than the originally demilitarised Free City.

All the time that thousands of men and hundreds of tonnes of war material were pouring into Danzig from Germany, the Nazi Press and even top Party member, Gauleiter Albert Forster, categorically denied foreign news accounts of German Army personnel being present in the Free City.

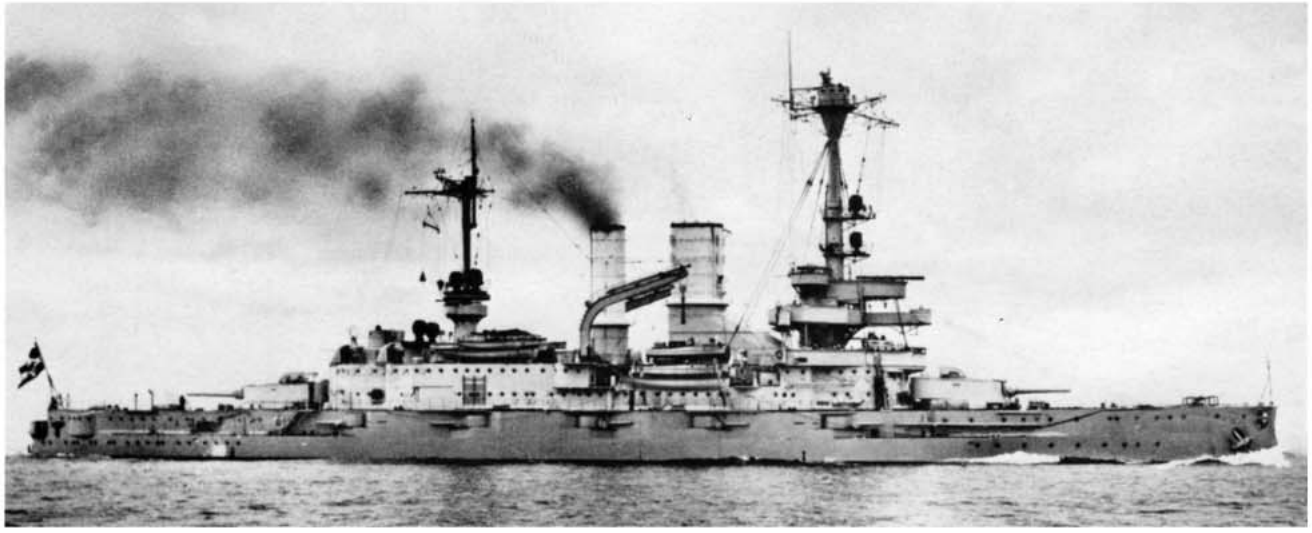
At the outbreak of war, Brigade Eberhardt was ready for action. It consisted of two regiments of infantry (Danziger I and Danziger II of the Landespolizei) of the Territorial Police, each about 3,000 strong; an artillery unit, SS-Heimwehr-Danzig around 2,500 strong, and other formations, like the SA coastguard unit (SA Danziger Küstenschutz), the Danzig Schupo, and a battalion of the German Construction Service (Baubatallion Danzig Arbeitdienst). The total strength of the Brigade was 12,000 men, with 44 field guns, 12 anti-aircraft guns, 48 anti-tank guns, 160 medium machine guns and 500 light machine guns.

His German adversary was Generalmajor Friedrich Eberhardt, commanding Brigade Eberhardt, who began building up its strength in Danzig under the guise of a Territorial Police Force. Within two months of its formation in June 1939, General Eberhardt could muster some 12,000 men for the coming operation with orders simply to 'return Danzig to the German Reich'.

The brigade was under the operational orders of General der Artillerie Georg von Küchler, the commanding officer of the 3rd German Army in East Prussia. One of the tasks of Brigade Eberhardt was to remove 'the Polish presence' from the city, occupy Westerplatte on the first day, and thus open the way for conveying Danzig to the German Reich.

Aside from Brigade Eberhardt, several other units were available; for example, the SS-Wachsturmbann Eimann, consisting of some 500 men clad in black SS uniforms with white armbands. All of them had been recruited from the Danzig region. Their job was to help the police carry out special duties and although this formation was part of the SS, independent of the Wehrmacht, it took part in the siege as later evidence revealed.

In the second half of May, the Polish Government was informed by the German authorities of an intended visit of the cruiser *Königsberg* to Danzig from August 25-29. The official explanation was to honour the fallen sailors of the Imperial German Navy cruiser *Magdeburg* which had been sunk on August 27, 1914 in the Gulf of Finland. As some of the sailors were indeed buried in Danzig, the announced intention was borne out in historical fact so it was a convenient ruse for the attack on Poland which had been fixed for August 26. However in the event, instead of the *Königsberg* as originally planned, the German Naval High Command (OKM) decided to substitute a 1906 vintage but recently modernised battleship, the 13,000-ton *Schleswig-Holstein*, a gunnery training ship. Undoubtedly she was chosen because of her heavier guns: 4 of 280mm, 10 of 150mm, 4 AA guns of 88mm calibre and others.



To back up the land-based assault, the Germans planned a variation on the old theme of gunboat diplomacy — only this time the boat was to be a battleship! Under the pretence of honouring fallen comrades from the First World War, in May the Polish Government was given three months' notice of its intended visit, Hitler having already fixed the date for the invasion of Poland as August 26. The ship chosen to fire the first shots of the Second World War was *Schleswig-Holstein* and on August 24 she slipped her moorings at Swinemünde on Germany's Baltic coast for the 200-mile voyage east to Danzig.

In an order to Kapitän zur See Gustav Kleikamp, commanding the *Schleswig-Holstein*, Generaladmiral Conrad Albrecht of German Naval Command (East) (Marinegruppen Befehlshaber Ost) specified his objective as follows: to enter Danzig harbour in a peaceful and most dignified manner; not to open fire unless fired at first; to be decisive and confident but not to engage in fighting before 'Y'-Hour, and to co-operate with Generalmajor Eberhardt.

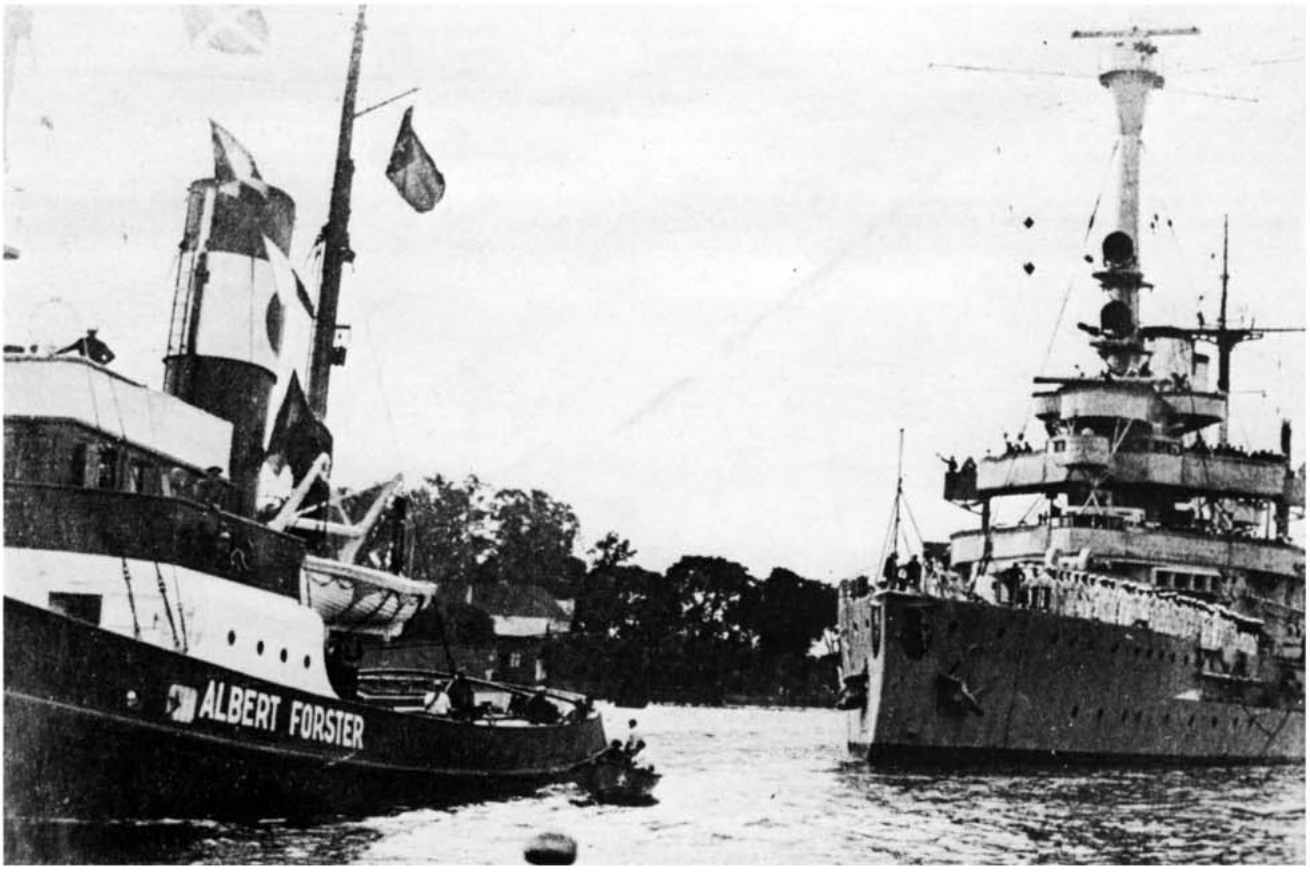
On the night of August 24 the battleship left its base at the mouth of the Swinemünde (Swina) and took course for Danzig. A rendezvous took place at sea with the ships of the 1st Minesweeping Flotilla, from which she took on board 225 marines from the Stosstrupp 3. Marine-Abteilung Swinemünde.

On the morning of the 25th the *Schleswig-Holstein* appeared off Danzig, escorted by the minesweepers. At 9.30 a.m. she entered Port Canal towed by two new tugs, the *Danzig* and *Albert Forster*. The water in the channel was so turbulent from the bow waves that it seemed at any moment the canal would overspill its banks. Thousands of people standing along the canal welcomed the old battleship and an official ceremony took place inside the harbour. Following naval custom and diplomatic protocol, Kapitän Kleikamp went ashore and even paid a visit to Poland's Commissioner General Marian Chodacki, who in return visited the ship. Later naval cadets marched into the city behind their own military band, much to the jubilation of enthusiastically cheering crowds.

At 5.00 p.m. the ship was towed back into the canal and moored just opposite Guardroom II on Westerplatte. From her superstructure, towers and masts, she had a perfect view into the open area around the barracks and guardrooms. During the night of 25-26th when she maintained a complete blackout, Kleikamp received an order to postpone operations until further notice.

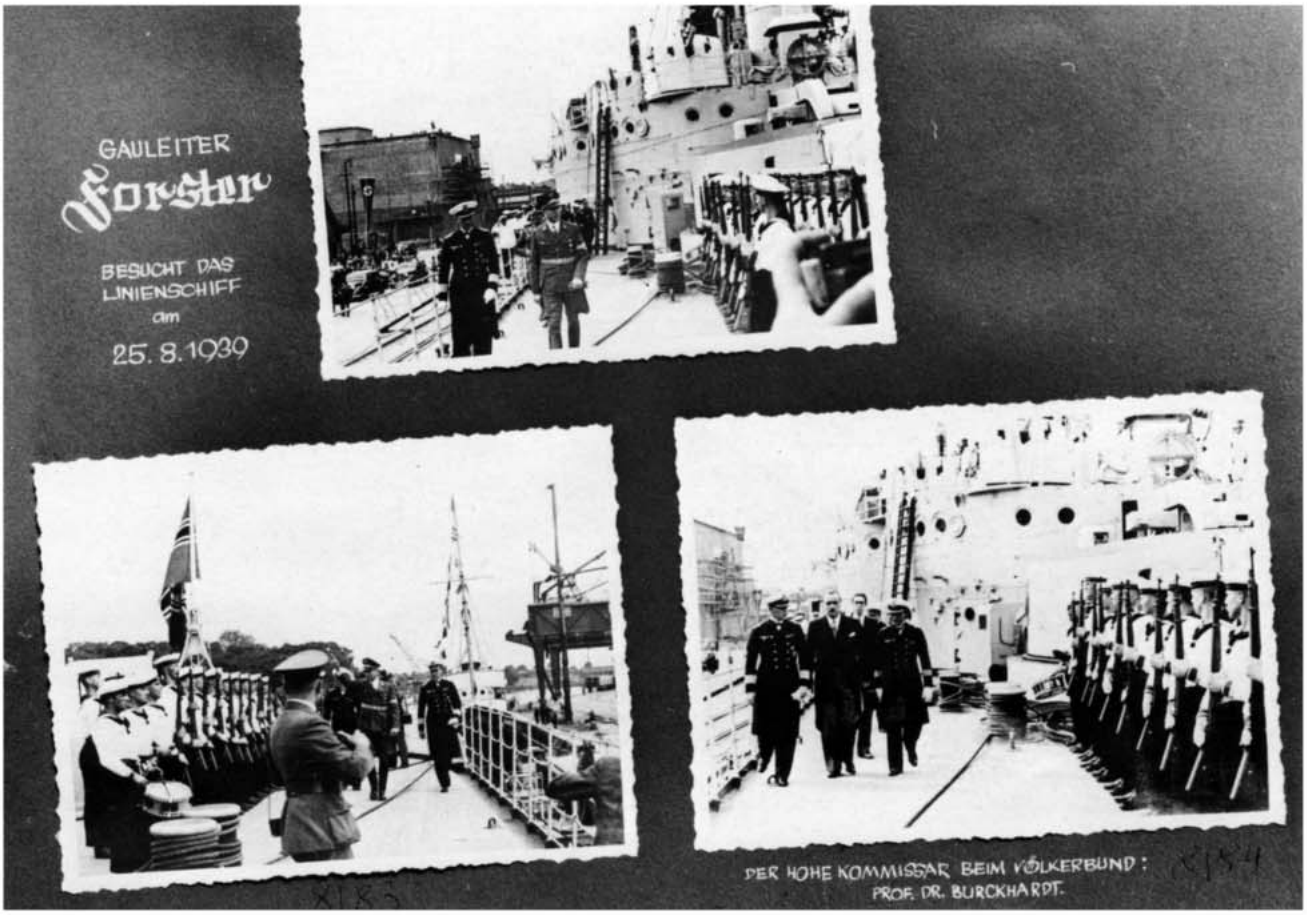
The next day air humidity and atmospheric pressure were carefully measured by releasing several small balloons, and a fire plan was worked out with targets identified and marked. The big guns traversed around and from time to time they stopped for a while directly facing chosen points. Then at 6.00 p.m. on August 26 the *Schleswig-Holstein* was towed further up the canal and moored at Weichselmünde.

The *Schleswig-Holstein* was a Deutschland-class battleship which had been launched in December 1906 and which had seen action at Jutland in May 1916. She was one of the six battleships that Germany was permitted to retain under the Versailles Treaty and in 1936, as part of the massive naval building programme, the *Schleswig-Holstein* and her sister ship *Schlesien* underwent extensive modification for service as gunnery training ships. Her main armament consisted of four 280mm (11-inch) guns, backed up with ten 150mm (6-inch), four 88mm (3.5-inch) and four 20mm. Her normal complement would be 743 including 175 cadets. The ship was under the command of Kapitän zur See Gustav Kleikamp and before they set sail he addressed the ship's company on their coming mission.



The next morning, Thursday the 25th, the *Schleswig-Holstein* appeared off Danzig and entered the Port Canal with the help of two tugs, the *Albert Forster* being named after the German Gauleiter of Danzig.

Most fortunately, the ship's photo album of the visit survived the war and is now preserved in the archives of the Polish Library in London, providing us with dramatic pictorial coverage of the days which followed.



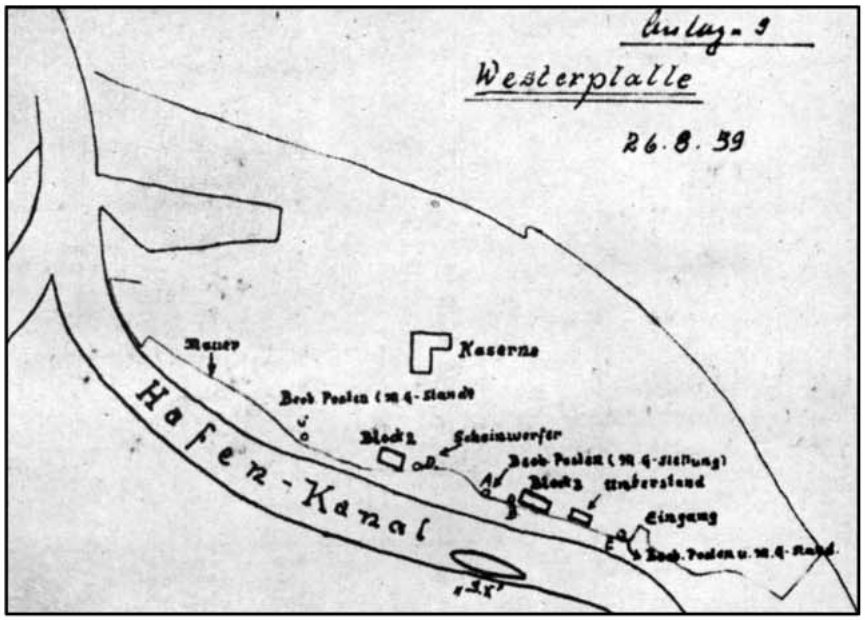
The ship was tied up on the southern bank of the canal just opposite Guardhouse II. When last-minute orders arrived on the night of August 25 that the operation would not now take place the following morning as planned, the postponement gave Kapitän Kleikamp and his gunnery officers more time to pinpoint and range their targets *(below)*.

The Last Hours of Peace

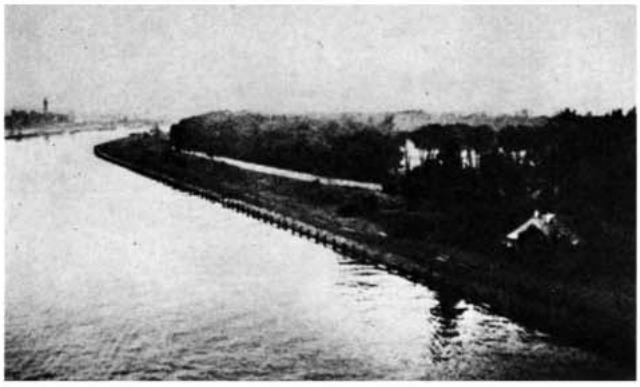
On the afternoon of Thursday, August 31, Kapitän Kleikamp received the message that the planned invasion of Poland would take place the next morning. His strategy was based on surprise. A short but intense bombardment by the battleship and supplementary machine gun fire from New Port was to be instantly followed up by an assault force of marines at company strength. Kleikamp assumed that the psychological effect of almost point-blank fire by the *Schleswig-Holstein* would demoralise the Polish garrison to such a degree that the occupation of Westerplatte would be accomplished with minimal delay.

At 6.35 p.m. came coded confirmation that the attack would begin on September 1 at 4.45 a.m. At 11.00 p.m. the final orders were issued to begin preparations for the commencement of hostilities. At 11.30 p.m. the Marine-Sturmkompanie under its commander, Leutnant Wilhelm Henningsen, disembarked and at 2.00 a.m. took up their initial positions at Möwenschanze (Mewi Szaniec), an old fortress on the narrow part of the peninsula about 400 metres from the brick wall and railway gate.

At the same time, the machine gun platoon from the battleship occupied positions in New Port on the other side of the river.



Two MG34s were set up in what came to be known as 'the white silo', and two more in an unfinished building where Leutnant Hartwig set up his command post from which he was in contact with the ship. Further to the west, in a red brick silo, were



Left: **From the crow's nest, the crew had a perfect observation platform over Westerplatte — the depot's red wall which would have to be breached standing out clearly.** *Right:* **Without his own battleship, Karel's crow's nest for his comparison photo was the top of one of the dockside cranes in New Port, and it gives a good illustration of how much of the northern canal bank was lost in the 1960s — including the famous 'Rote Mauer'.**

More pictures from the ship's album: *Links:* **'Der I.Offizier u. der Führer des Stosstrupp "SX".'** *Rechts:* **'Stosstrupp "SX".'**

two more MG34s with another pair near Lotswenweg manned by the coastguard unit of the Territorial Police (Küstenschutz der Danziger Landespolizei). The Danzig police provided one machine gun at the ferry landing pier, and another in the Free Zone Basin. Major Winter from the Danzig police was put in charge of all the police units selected to take part in the attack.

At 4.30 a.m. an alarm sounded and the *Schleswig-Holstein* slowly moved down the canal to take up its battle position.

On the previous afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Wincenty Sobocinski, the Chief of the Military Department within the Commissioner General's office in Danzig, paid his last visit to Westerplatte. Ever since 1935 it had been agreed that in case of an unprovoked attack the garrison was to resist for six hours. Now this period had been extended to twelve hours. Normally cheerful and friendly, on this occasion the Colonel's expression was sombre. He knew the real situation: that there was little chance of rescue or help from outside. This small group of men was going to be cut off from the rest of the Polish Armed Forces and sacrificed in the name of Poland's right to this small 'stretch of land'.

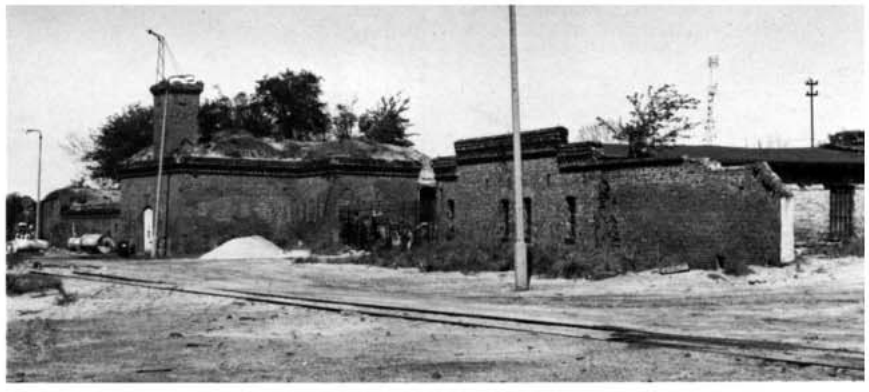
Since the *Schleswig-Holstein*'s arrival on August 25, one-third of the garrison had been put on stand-by duty in shifts, manning all the well-concealed outposts and lookout positions from dusk to dawn. Another third performed open guard duty, while the remainder were rested. However, even while this latter group were off duty they still had to wear their uniforms, though they were permitted to take off their boots. To the German observers, the intended impression was to be that life continued normally on the other side of the red brick wall and that the Poles were not paying serious attention to the presence of the battleship.

On this last night of peace the garrison functioned as a perfect military machine. All the outposts well hidden from enemy observation were manned and weapons loaded ready to open fire at a moment's notice. Sentries posted at vulnerable points reported any activity. Throughout the night they were constantly inspected by officers and NCO patrols. The command was well aware that any successful German breakthrough which might lead to hand-to-hand combat would have tragic consequences for the garrison.

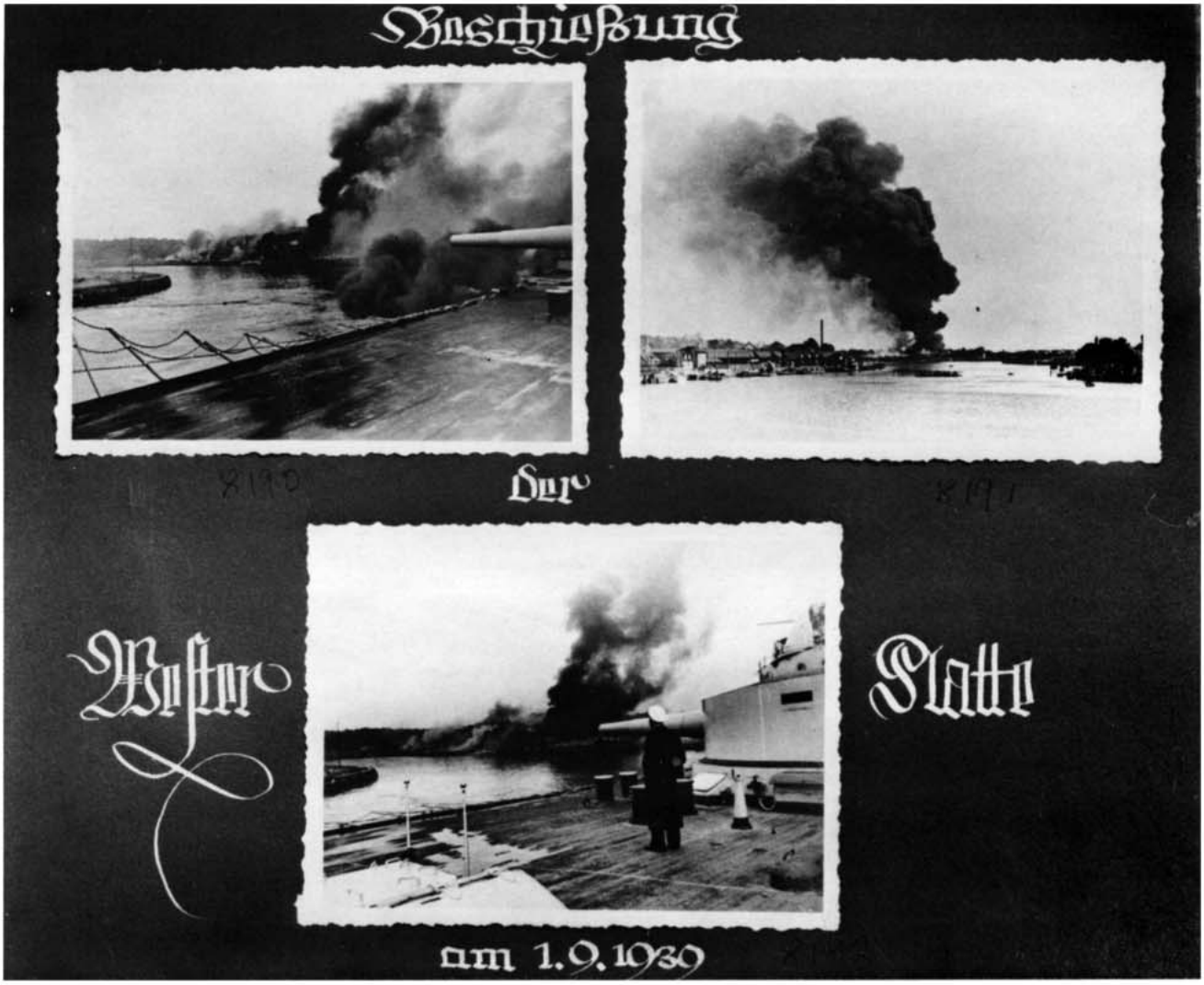
Although the men were tired through hard work and lack of sleep, their morale was high. The garrison was aware that war was coming and that any night could bring death and destruction. Nevertheless, they remained fully convinced — like most Poles at the time — that any conflict would result in a Polish victory.

Ready for Y-Hour — the 'shock troops' of Stosstrupp 3. Marine-Abteilung Swinemünde prepare to disembark.

At 4.15 a.m., when the stand-by crew of Outpost Prom were preparing to leave their position unobserved, a single pistol shot was heard from the grove behind the brick wall. Curiously, this shot is widely reported in statements by the garrison but not by the Germans. The circumstances surrounding it remain unresolved. Was it an accidental shot . . . the result maybe of nervous strain, or perhaps a sympathetic warning of imminent attack? If so, it achieved its objective. The crew of Outpost Prom remained in its entrenchment just long enough to meet the first assault.



At 2.00 a.m. on September 1 they formed up here at the old Möwenschanze fortification on the east bank (see map pages 8-9) about 400 yards south of Westerplatte's railway gate.

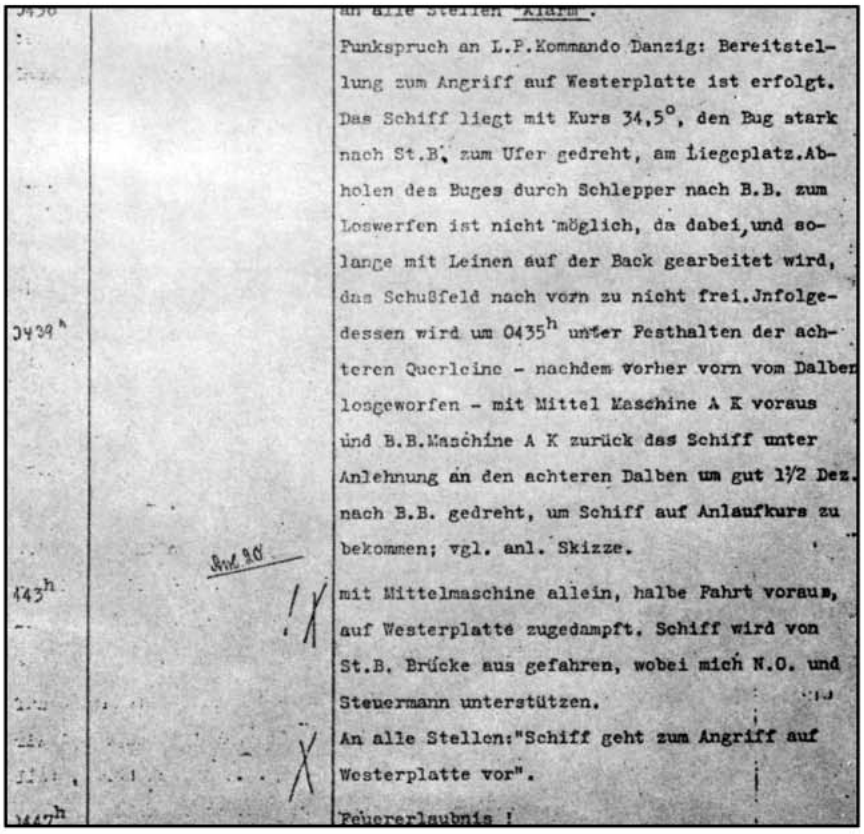


The First Day of War

At 4.47 a.m. on Friday morning the order 'Feuer!' resounded from the loudspeakers throughout the old battleship. The huge guns at zero angle opened up from a range of about 500 metres at the south-eastern part of Westerplatte, while machine guns from New Port swept the whole area with tracer ammunition. Within seconds, the buildings and installations of the HWC workshops were engulfed in flames and smoke. The houses on Fünf Pfeifen Bogen (Zakret Pieciu Gwizdkow or Five Whistles Bend) were heavily damaged merely from the blast of the big guns. Tops of trees sheared as shells screeched overhead, some hitting the brick wall leaving gaping holes. Within eight minutes of this initial bombardment, the ship fired 8 280mm shells, 59 150mm shells and 600 rounds from its 20mm AA cannon.

As the first shells burst around him, Major Henryk Sucharski put the garrison on battle alert. The penetrating noise of the alarm bells alerted the guardrooms and living quarters. Singly or in groups, soldiers, still pulling on their helmets and other pieces of equipment, ran through the machine gun fire to their allotted positions.

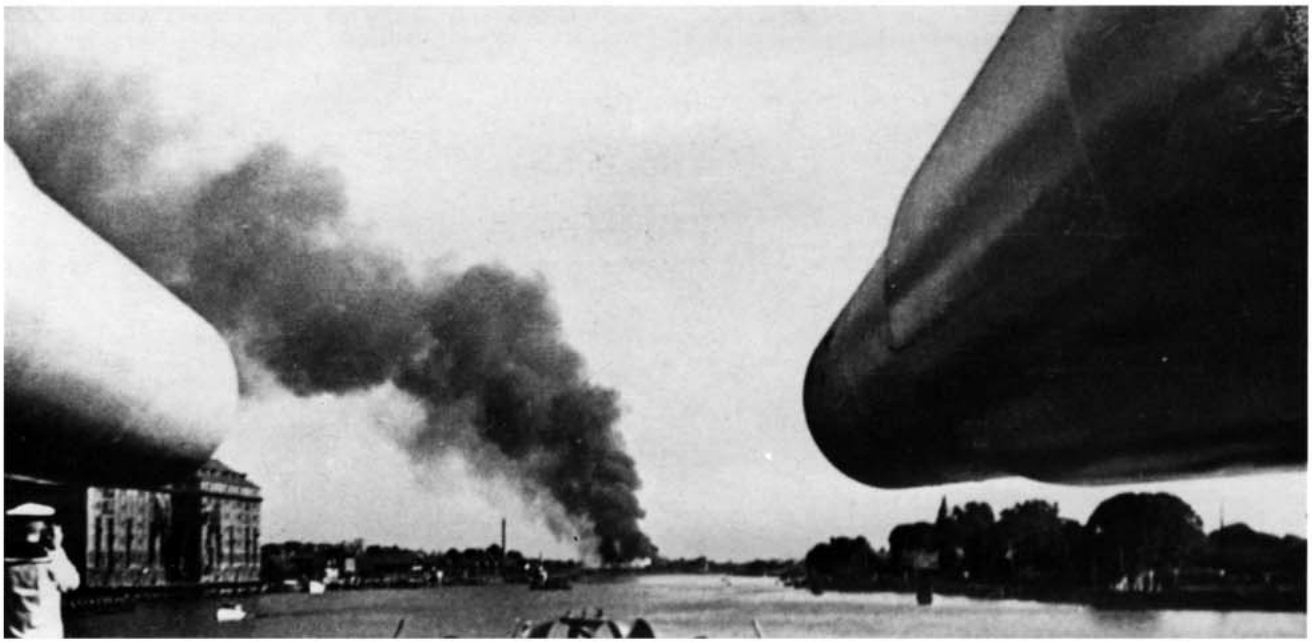
Countdown to World War: '0430 Radio message to Danzig L.P. Kommando: preparations for attack on flat carried out. Ship is on course of 34.5 degrees with prow turned sharply to starboard . . . 0443 . . . at half-speed towards the flat western area . . . 0447 Permission to open fire.'


an alle Stellen "Alarm".
Punkspruch an L.P.Kommando Danzig: Bereitstellung zum Angriff auf Westerplatte ist erfolgt. Das Schiff liegt mit Kurs 34,5°, den Bug stark nach St.B. zum Ufer gedreht, am Liegeplatz. Abholen des Buges durch Schlepper nach B.B. zum Loswerfen ist nicht möglich, da dabei und solange mit Leinen auf der Back gearbeitet wird, das Schußfeld nach vorn zu nicht frei. Infolgedessen wird um 0435h unter Festhalten der achteren Querleine - nachdem vorher vorn vom Dalben losgeworfen - mit Mittel Maschine A K voraus und B.B.Maschine A K zurück das Schiff unter Anlehnung an den achteren Dalben um gut 1½ Dez. nach B.B. gedreht, um Schiff auf Anlaufkurs zu bekommen; vgl. anl. Skizze.
0439h
Anl. 10
0443h
mit Mittelmaschine allein, halbe Fahrt voraus, auf Westerplatte zugedampft. Schiff wird von St.B. Brücke aus gefahren, wobei mich N.O. und Steuermann unterstützen.
An alle Stellen: "Schiff geht zum Angriff auf Westerplatte vor".
0447h
Feuererlaubnis !

These pictures show just how close the target was — not much more than 250 yards to the HWC workshops (*left*) hit with the first salvo. *Right:* The blast from the guns was so great that the shock wave literally blew down the buildings on the corner of Five Whistles Bend as the shells streaked past. The ferry landing quay is marked by the small white sign (we shall see it again later on) just to the left of the bracing wires. Outpost Prom attacked along the beach, lies behind the sign in the trees.

The same fire as seen from the street in Neufahrwasser — the New Port — that leads to Five Whistles Bend.

Today this is a dead-end with none of the original houses remaining.

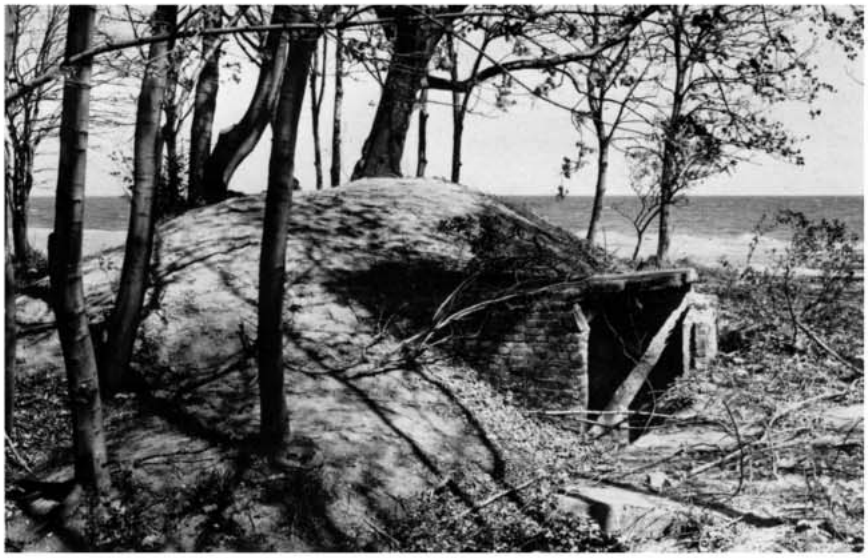


After its initial bombardment, the *Schleswig-Holstein* pulled back upstream. With the help of a river launch, Karel Margry matched the view from exactly the same spot with the tower of the Weichselmünde (Mouth of the Vistula) fortress on the right-hand bank and the original warehouses still standing on the left.

The first attack goes in along the railway line. Smoke from the blazing workshops helps provide some cover.

At 4.55 a.m. the bombardment by the battleship suddenly stopped and the marines moved in to attack the railway gate with two infantry platoons on the flanks and a pioneer platoon in the middle supported by machine guns from the rear. Corporal Szamlewski with one LMG and two men was waiting on the embankment next to the first ammunition shelter just behind the railway gate. There was a sudden explosion and when the dust settled there was a gap by the gate some twenty metres across. Through it, the pioneers ran unsuspectingly towards Corporal Szamlewski's position and were taken completely by surprise as the Poles opened fire. Dead and wounded littered the ground and it was some time before the Germans could reorganise.

Outpost Prom, still undiscovered and under the temporary command of Warrant Officer Jan Gryczman, also began firing with all its weapons. Germans moving rapidly along the beach were caught in the cross-fire with heavy loss of life and injury. The two remaining machine guns concentrated on the second infantry platoon, whose progress was slowed by broken trees and barbed wire obstacles. The marines, unprepared for such opposition, became disorganised and confused. After regrouping, they advanced



The emplacement just north of the railway, about 200 metres behind the station, from which Corporal Edmund Szamlewski and two men with a light machine gun decimated the initial German attack.

Left: **Westerplatte railway station just beyond the railway gate. It was here that the station master, reserve Company Sergeant-Major Wojciech Najsarek, was killed in the very first minutes of the assault — possibly the first victim of the Second World War.**

The station building survived almost intact up to the sixth day when it was blown up by German pioneers. *Right:* **The attack came up the track on the right, the gate being situated roughly where the group of posts now stand.**

After the first attack had been pressed home for an hour and a half, German casualties had mounted to near 50 killed or wounded and at this point Leutnant Henningsen decided to call his men back. Still well outside the fortress proper, this unfortunate marine is being carried back along the track to Möwenschanze.

again, this time in a more orderly manner and very soon they were cutting through the barbed wire. Lieutenant Leon Pajak, the commander, then arrived with the rest of Prom's crew and the requested mortar support resulted in halting the attack.

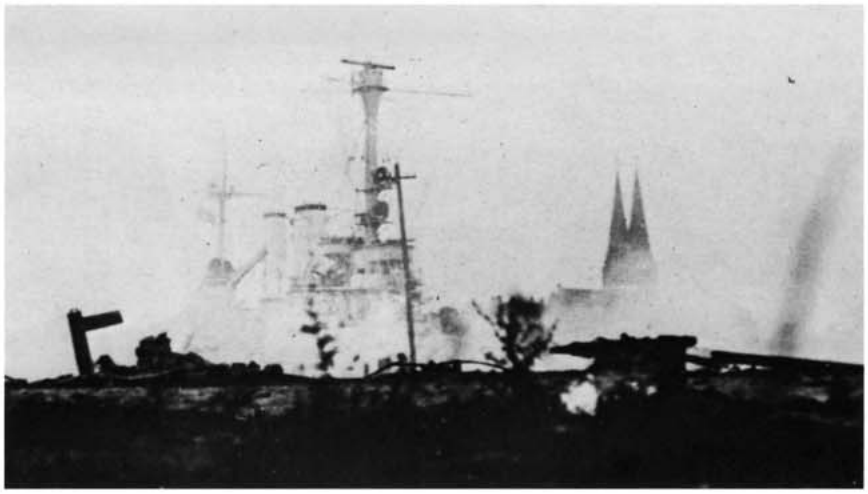
Outpost Prom was saved. The Germans pulled back to their original position, leaving behind stretcher teams to retrieve their dead and wounded. At 6.22 a.m. Leutnant Henningsen sent a message to Kapitän Kleikamp: 'Casualties too great — we are coming back.' Losses were estimated at 40–50 killed and wounded.

Leutnant Hartwig promptly brought his machine guns to bear on the now exposed Prom from the far side of the canal. The Polish 75mm field gun firing back forced some of the Germans to change their positions but without serious losses although gun commander, Corporal Eugeniusz Grabowski, testified after the war that he had succeeded in destroying some of the machine guns.

At this point, Kapitän Kleikamp and Leutnant Henningsen realised that the next attack must be preceded by further shelling from the *Schleswig-Holstein*. Some of the Germans believed that the Poles had marksmen in the trees, and one of the aims of the bombardment to follow was to eliminate these phantom riflemen.

To achieve the maximum concentration of fire, the battleship manoeuvred to a position to permit a broadside from all four 280mm guns. At 7.40 a.m. it began firing, the shelling lasting till 8.15 a.m., then resuming again after a short break until 8.55 a.m. By the end of this period 90 280mm shells, 407 150mm shells, 366 88mm AA shells and about 3,000 rounds of 20mm were expended. During the bombardment the single Polish 75mm was knocked out.

The fearsome avalanche of metal brought branches crashing down while tons of earth, sand and trees were blasted into the air. The scene was shrouded by smoke and the smell of explosives and heat emanated from hot metal.



This is the only picture which appears to exist showing the *Schleswig-Holstein* from Westerplatte itself. Although undated it has been taken from the south-east corner with the church of Nowy (New) Port in the background. This had its spires knocked off during the German-Soviet fighting in 1945 and is now restored to a different design.

The heaviest single piece of armament available to the Poles was their 75mm field gun which had been dismantled and smuggled into Westerplatte early in 1939. *Left:* **It was put out of action here on the first morning by an 88mm shell from the *Schleswig-Holstein* and became a much-prized trophy of war being taken on board the ship when finally captured** *(right)*.

At 8.55 a.m. the German marines, now reinforced with a unit from SS-Heimwehr, began the second assault of the day. Sixty of the SS advanced on the right while the middle ground was again taken by the platoon of pioneers, reduced now to 21 men. To the left were 18 marines, the remnants of the second platoon. Each group was supported from behind by a machine gun crew. The attack moved slowly over the difficult terrain, but this time with greater co-ordination.

The burden of the Polish defence still rested with Prom, and the assault concentrated upon it. Steadily, sections of infantry were able to approach within hand-grenade range. To avoid the danger of unequal close combat which would have had catastrophic consequences for the outnumbered defenders, Warrant Officer Gryczman received permission to retreat to Guardroom I.

At 10.55 a.m. the marines reported that they were approaching one of the Polish guardrooms, but that resistance was strengthening. In another message an hour later the information was repeated but this time it was the SS unit that was retreating with all machine guns lost. Just after midday, Leutnant Henningsen was fatally wounded (he died the following day), the company being taken over by Leutnant Schug who pulled the men back. At 1.00 p.m. Schug informed Kapitän Kleikamp that 'taking over Westerplatte by assault groups was impossible'.

German reports of stronger resistance were well founded as troops now faced the main line of defence. Cross and flanking fire made an infantry assault impossible and at 1.52 p.m. Kleikamp had to report to Naval Command East that the second attack had failed.

Although the main German effort had been concentrated at the east end, there were several assaults carried out by the Danzig police to the west and south of Westerplatte. One platoon landed in the ammunition basin with the task of penetrating from this side. They were driven off by Outposts Elektrownia and Lazienki. Later, at 11.00 p.m. Outpost Przystan stopped an approach by two craft across the canal from the Free Zone Basin.

In the afternoon, Kapitän Kleikamp, speaking to Admiral Albrecht, made it clear that bombardment from the air was necessary. After several talks between different High Commands, on Göring's instructions an air attack was laid on for the next morning by 60–70 Stukas, which would be closely followed by another marine assault.

During the night, on orders from Major Sucharski, Sergeant Michal Gawlicki together with Corporal Eugeniusz Jazdz managed to unscrew a section of railway track roughly half-way between the railway station and Guardroom V. Throughout the operation they were a target for German machine gunners with the risk of the slightest noise endangering them. Only the sound of distant firing muffled the sound of their tools.

Gordon's Gin — THE HEART OF A GOOD COCKTAIL

The Evening News

LARGEST EVENING NET SALE IN THE WORLD

3RD EDITION

La Coquille

DANZIG DECLARES ITSELF GERMAN

Warsaw Says: "Nazi Warplanes Bomb Two Polish Towns"

HITLER'S CALL TO HIS ARMY

"I Have No Choice But To Meet Force With Force"

HITLER TO-DAY ISSUED A PROCLAMATION TO THE GERMAN ARMY DECLARING THAT FROM NOW ON HE WOULD MEET FORCE WITH FORCE.

HERR FÖRSTER, THE "DICTATOR OF DANZIG," HAS PROCLAIMED THAT DANZIG HAS RETURNED TO THE REICH AND THAT "THE HOUR HAS COME."

IT IS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED IN WARSAW TO-DAY (SAYS B.U.P.) THE GERMANS HAVE BOMBED THE RAILWAY STATION OF CZEW AND THE TOWN OF RYPNIC AS WELL AS PUTZK, NEAR CZEW.

THE BIG MOVE BEGINS BY ROAD, RAIL—AND SEA

11,000 Children Go In Pleasure Boats: It Was The Only Way

"WARSAW BOMBED"

HITLER TOLD THE ARMY

THE DANZIG DECREE

"THE HOUR HAS COME"

All Aboard The Holiday Ships For "L," "F" and "Y"

BRIGHTON READY FOR 30,000

EAST END WAS HAPPY ABOUT IT

Hitler's 16 Points

Faced with the fait accompli of the surprise attack on Poland, the British Prime Minister, Mr Neville Chamberlain, informed the House of Commons on the afternoon of September 1 that 'unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland.'

For months we have been suffering under the torture of a problem which the Versailles Diktat created — a problem which has deteriorated until it becomes intolerable for us. Danzig was and is a German city. The Corridor was and is German. Both these territories owe their cultural development exclusively to the German people. Danzig was separated from us, the Corridor was annexed by Poland. As in other German territories of the East, all German minorities living there have been ill-treated in the most distressing manner. More than 1,000,000 people of German blood had in the years 1919-20 to leave their homeland. . . .

It is impossible to demand that an impossible position should be cleared up by peaceful revision and at the same time constantly reject peaceful revision. It is also impossible to say that he who undertakes to carry out these revisions for himself transgresses a law, since the Versailles Diktat is not law to us. A signature was forced out of us with pistols at our head and with the threat of hunger for millions of people. And then this document, with our signature, obtained by force, was proclaimed as a solemn law. . . .

I am determined to solve (1) the Danzig question; (2) the question of the Corridor; and (3) to see to it that a change is made in the relationship between Germany and Poland that shall ensure a peaceful co-existence. In this I am resolved to continue to fight until either the present Polish Government is willing to bring about this change or until another Polish Government is ready to do so. I am resolved to remove from the German frontiers the element of uncertainty, the everlasting atmosphere of conditions resembling civil war. I will see to it that in the East there is, on the frontier, a peace precisely similar to that on our other frontiers. . . .

This night for the first time Polish regular soldiers fired on our own territory. Since 5.45 a.m. we have been returning the fire, and from now on bombs will be met with bombs. Whoever fights with poison gas will be fought with poison gas. Whoever departs from the rules of humane warfare can only expect that we shall do the same. I will continue this struggle, no matter against whom, until the safety of the Reich and its rights are secured.

For six years now I have been working on the building up of the German defences. Over 90 milliards have in that time been spent on the building up of these defence forces. They are now the best equipped and are above all comparison with what they were in 1914. My trust in them is unshakable. . . .

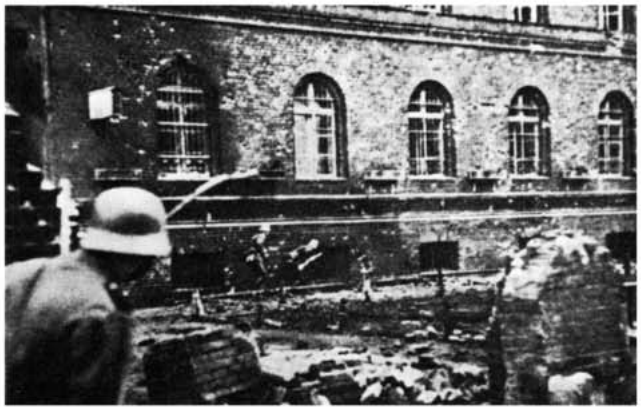
I am asking of no German man more than I myself was ready throughout four years at any time to do. There will be no hardships for Germans to which I myself will not submit. My whole life henceforth belongs more than ever to my people. I am from now on just first soldier of the German Reich. I have once more put on that coat that was the most sacred and dear to me. I will not take it off again until victory is secured, or I will not survive the outcome.

As a National Socialist and as German soldier I enter upon this struggle with a stout heart. My whole life has been nothing but one long struggle for my people, for its restoration, and for Germany. There was only one watchword for that struggle: faith in this people. One word I have never learned: that is, surrender. . . .

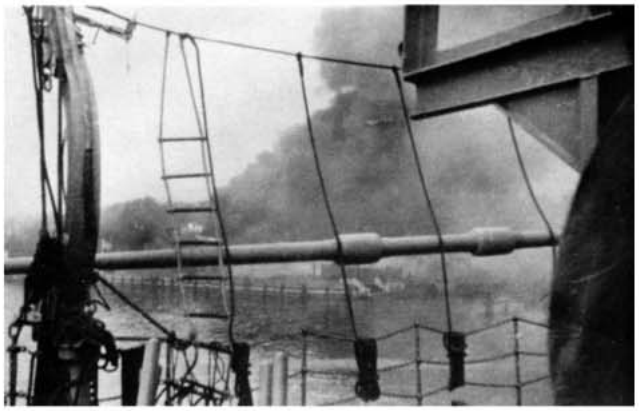
ADOLF HITLER,
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

The post office, another symbol of the Polish presence in pre-war Danzig, was attacked by troops of the Danziger Landespolizei,

simultaneously to the assault on Westerplatte. The building lay on Heveliusplatz now Obroncow Poczty Polskiej.



However, the 52 Polish postal workers bottled up inside proved stubborn defenders and during the day the Germans had to call up more reinforcements. Field guns and a 105mm howitzer were brought to bear on the building; SS-Wachsturmbann Eimann and the Danziger SS-Heimwehr arrived with armoured cars (*above right*) and a Pionier-Zug was sent in by Generalmajor Eberhardt armed with explosives and flamethrowers. Late in the afternoon of September 1, after eight of their number had been killed and six seriously wounded (all of whom died later in hospital), the 38 survivors surrendered. They were taken prisoner and put on trial as franc-tireurs by a German military court and sentenced to death. All were shot save four who managed to escape the mass execution. *Right:* Today the road which originally ran before the building has been removed and this monument *(below)* constructed in steel stands as an impressive reminder of that Friday.



Meanwhile Westerplatte burns — two more snaps from the ship's photo album.

The Second Day

At 1.30 a.m. on Saturday morning Admiral Albrecht was advised that the planned air raid had been cancelled and that the German High Command had passed on the responsibility for further action against Westerplatte to Army Group North (Heeresgruppe Nord) under Generaloberst Fedor von Bock. During the night, the Naval Intelligence concluded that Westerplatte comprised 20 modern strongholds interconnected by underground corridors and this unfounded information was passed to Admiral Albrecht at 7.00 a.m. Von Bock, who received an order to include Westerplatte under his command at 8.50 a.m., formed the opinion that the next attack should be prepared with the utmost precision. Admiral Albrecht concurred, but stressed that the time factor was now vital. The *Schleswig-Holstein* was needed as soon as possible to support land operations against Gdynia and Hel, and the Army wanted the use of Danzig harbour to bring in reinforcements.

At noon, Hitler ordered Westerplatte to be taken that very same day. Von Bock argued that it would not be possible in the time, and Eberhardt expressed the view that air bombing by itself would not force the Poles to surrender. It was essential to have the support of heavy field artillery and pioneers with flame throwers. The civilian population would also have to be evacuated from New Port. The Army High Command agreed to defer the attack to the following day subject to Hitler's approval.

At Admiral Albrecht's request, at 3.00 p.m. the Pioneer Training Battalion (Pi.Lehrbtl.) from Rosslau near Dessau was put on stand-by duty. At 5.00 p.m. a company of pioneers under the command of Oberstleutnant Carl Henke was flown in 20 Ju 52s to Königsberg and moved on from

Sir Neville Henderson was received by Herr von Ribbentrop at half-past nine last night, and he delivered the warning message which was read to the House yesterday. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he must submit the communication to the German Chancellor. Our Ambassador declared his readiness to receive the Chancellor's reply. Up to the present no reply has been received.

It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which, meanwhile, had been put forward by the Italian Government, that hostilities should cease and that there should then immediately be a conference between the five Powers, Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government, for their part, would find it impossible to take part in a conference while Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment and Danzig is being made the subject of unilateral settlement by force. His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory.

There is one other matter to which allusion should be made in order that the present situation may be perfectly clear. Yesterday Herr Forster who, on 23rd August, had, in contravention of the Danzig constitution, become the head of the State, decreed the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and the dissolution of the Constitution. Herr Hitler was asked to give effect to this decree by German law. At a meeting of the Reichstag yesterday morning a law was passed for the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. The international status of Danzig as a Free City is established by a treaty of which His Majesty's Government are a signatory, and the Free City was placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The rights given to Poland in Danzig by treaty are defined and confirmed by agreement concluded between Danzig and Poland. The action taken by the Danzig authorities and the Reichstag yesterday is the final step in the unilateral repudiation of these international instruments, which could only be modified by negotiation. His Majesty's Government do not, therefore, recognise either the validity of the grounds on which the action of the Danzig authorities was based, the validity of the action itself, or of the effect given to it by the German Government.

PRIME MINISTER, HOUSE OF COMMONS,
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1939

During the whole battle for Westerplatte the Polish defenders were under observation and machine gun fire from Leutnant Hartwig's men in the warehouses (the white silo and others) and the lighthouse on the town side of the canal. *Right:* **Remember that the far bank was then about a third closer: the Germans were literally looking down the Poles' throats.**

By the end of the first day, after the almost unprecedented blasting of a shore position from point-blank range by a battleship, the German High Command must have been somewhat surprised to learn that the Poles were still holding out — and taking a high toll of the attacking troops. Now the invasion timetable was in jeopardy. Not only was the *Schleswig-Holstein* wanted elsewhere but the use of Danzig's port facilities was urgently required to support operations against Poland proper. To avoid any further delay, command of the operation was given to the chief of Herresgruppe Nord, Generaloberst Fedor von Bock.

there by land to Weichselmünde, where it arrived just before midnight. Although Generaloberst von Bock issued the order to attack the next day, on the insistence of Generalmajor Eberhardt, the Army High Command postponed it until Monday the 4th. At 5.00 p.m. Kapitän Kleikamp was informed by Eberhardt of the imminent pioneer support and the air strike, which would now take place at 6.00 p.m. that evening.

All this time, while the issue of air bombing and the date for another attack was being thrashed out between different German

The small force on Westerplatte — outnumbered possibly by as many as 100 to 1 — were now to be subjected to one of the most potent weapons in the German armoury of fifty years ago — the dive bomber. The Sturzkampfflugzeug was very much in vogue in the 1930s and it became a terrifying symbol of the lightning campaign against Poland. The Ju 87 personified the 'Stuka', some 300-odd being available to the Luftwaffe in September 1939.

This bomb crater, being examined by sailors from the *Schleswig-Holstein*, lay on what in 1939 was the garrison's parade ground. The barracks lie in the background.

It seems almost impossible to believe, but in the whole of the week-long siege of Westerplatte, under almost constant attack from the land, sea or air, of the 200 men manning the defences only 15 were killed. Seven of those men lost their lives here on the second day when Guardhouse V received a direct hit during the Stuka attack. Only three out of the ten-strong crew survived, those killed included Sergeant Adolf Petzelt, the post commander.

commands, the Polish garrison was kept under constant pressure. It was harrassed by patrols, sorties of variable strength, and artillery fire. After 1.00 p.m., however, with the exception of reconnaissance flights, a strange silence prevailed over the peninsula. This break in the fighting was readily exploited by the Poles to put their defences, disrupted by the heavy bombardment, back in order and brought to readiness.

Although the patrols sent out that Saturday afternoon confirmed that all the German troops had left Westerplatte, it appears that this information was not interpreted as implying an air raid. The Stuka attack came by complete surprise, the dive bombers suddenly appearing from the direction of Danzig. One by one each plane dived and released its bombs from just above the tree tops, then pulled back up into formation. Soon the whole of Westerplatte was engulfed in smoke, fire and dust. The bombs scored a direct hit on Guardroom V, burying the crew with only three men surviving. The barracks were hit in several places and in the eastern wing the bombs penetrated roof and first floor slabs, but leaving the sub-basement ceiling more or less intact as the designers had hoped. All telephone communications between the strongholds and the command post, however, were wiped out.

This air raid, which started at five minutes past six, lasted for 40 minutes. It was made by two groups of Stukas, 60 in all, and together they dropped 8 500kg bombs, 50 250kg bombs and 100 fragmentation bombs of 100kg, including some incendiary devices.

It was generally understood that if an infantry attack followed an air raid, the garrison would not survive, due to the likely breakdown of the 'fighting machine'. Major Sucharski thought the situation so serious that, as soon as the air raid was over, he ordered all secret documents to be destroyed. However, when the anticipated German infantry attack did not materialise, contact between the guardrooms and outposts was steadily restored. Also it soon became clear that the effect of the bombing was not as devastating as was first believed. To plug the gap caused by the elimination of Guardroom V, a new position was created nearby. That evening two sorties against Fort, the railway track and Guardrooms I and II were successfully fought off.

The others were Corporal Bronislaw Perucki, Lance Corporals Jan Gebura, Wladyslaw Okraszewski and Ignacy Zatorski and Privates Jozef Kita and Antoni Pirog.

The base of the demolished Guardhouse V was therefore a fitting location to establish the first memorial on Westerplatte erected here in 1946, the other eight Polish soldiers commemorated being Corporal Andrzej Kowalczyk, Lance-Corporal Zygmunt Zieba, and Privates Jan Czywil, Wladyslaw Jakubiak, Konstanty Jezierski, Mieczyslaw Krzak, Bronislaw Uss, and CSM Wojciech Najsarek. The wire fence separating Zone C from Zone B (see page 6) alongside the railway line can be seen in the background of both pictures. Major Sucharski died in 1946 and in September 1971 the casket containing his ashes was interred in front of the memorial.

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NO. 26,287 LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1939 BROADCASTING—Page Four ONE PENNY

'H.M.V.' RECORDS
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BRITAIN'S LAST WARNING

PRESENTED IN BERLIN LAST NIGHT

PREMIER'S MOMENTOUS DECLARATION

PEACE IMPOSSIBLE WHILE NAZIS RULE

'WE ARE RESOLVED THESE METHODS MUST END'

A last warning to Germany was delivered in Berlin last night by Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador.

Similar action was taken by M. Coulondre on behalf of the French Government.

Herr von Ribbentrop, who received Sir Nevile at 9.40, said that he must refer the British Government's communication to Herr Hitler.

The decision to give a final warning was announced by Mr. Chamberlain in a declaration in the House of Commons. He said:

"The British Ambassador in Berlin has been instructed to hand to the German Government a communication stating:

"Unless the German Government are prepared to give assurances that the German Government have suspended aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, the Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland."

Mr. Chamberlain added: "If the reply to this last warning is unfavourable, and I do not suggest it is likely to be otherwise, his Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for his passports. In that case we are ready."

MILITARY SERVICE UP TO 41

The Prime Minister is expected to inform the House of Commons, when it meets this afternoon, whether any reply has been received.

If not, simultaneous declarations will be made in Parliament and the French Chamber that both countries are at war in defence of Poland.

Mr. Chamberlain, in his address to the House of Commons, hastily summoned following the German annexation of Dantzig and the invasion of Poland, declared that it appeared he would not be able to avoid the responsibility of asking the nation to accept the "awful arbitrament of war."

He announced that the liability for military service would be extended to include all fit men between 18 and 41.

RESPONSIBILITY ON HITLER ALONE

Other points from the speech, which was listened to by a full attendance of M.P.s, were:

We shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor.

The situation in all directions is more favourable and reassuring than in 1914.

Regarding immediate manpower and requirements the Royal Navy, Army and Air Force have as many men as they can conveniently handle at the present moment.

It now remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle which we have so earnestly endeavoured to avoid with determination to see it through to the end.

We shall enter it with a clear conscience, the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral approval of the greater part of the world.

We have no quarrel with the German people except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government.

As long as that Government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years—the sickening technique of which we are now so familiar with—there will be no peace in Europe.

We are resolved that these methods must come to an end.

Mr. Greenwood, acting Leader of the Opposition, pledging Labour's support, said: "Herr Hitler has become the arch-enemy of mankind."

NO ACTION BY ITALY

At a Privy Council the King signed Orders in Council completing the mobilisation of the Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. The Territorial Army was embodied.

In France general mobilisation was decreed and a state of siege was established throughout the country.

Herr Hitler yesterday addressed the German Reichstag. He declared that he had decided to give Poland "no light lesson."

A communique in Rome announced that the Council of Ministers has decided to refrain from any military initiative.

In Washington President Roosevelt stated that it was his firm intention to keep the United States out of any general war.

A TENSE HOUSE HEARS PREMIER

'AWFUL ARBITRAMENT OF WAR'

BY OUR OWN REPRESENTATIVE
WESTMINSTER, Friday.

With stern determination Parliament resolved to-night that we must go forward to "the awful arbitrament of war."

The "senseless ambition" of Herr Hitler must be defeated. So long as the Nazi Government exists and follows its "sickening technique" of the last two years there can be no peace in Europe.

Thus in stark, sombre phrase the Prime Minister put the issue, and deep-voiced cheers from every bench, from every mouth in the thronged House vowed support to the great resolve.

The Prime Minister and Mr. Greenwood, the acting Socialist leader, entered the House from opposite sides of the Speaker's chair at practically the same moment, and so by a rare inappropriate chance one long united burst of cheering greeted them both.

Members who could find no place sat in double rows in the galleries on either side, stood in a dense throng at the Bar and crowded about and behind the Speaker's chair.

MEMORIES OF 1914

There was no room for the Cabinet on the Treasury Bench and Ministers had to listen from unfamiliar places.

Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill were facing each other from their several corners, with poignant memories, doubtless, of the only occasion comparable to this, that on Aug. 3, 1914.

Then Sir Edward Grey had but to read to arrive. He spoke to men convinced, as grave, heavy and set faces, as the cheers which came like gunfire showed.

From the places above the clock which members of the Royal House have long been wont to occupy, the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Kent listened to the speeches. In the Diplomatic Gallery were the Ambassadors of Poland, Russia, China, Brazil and Belgium, but no representative of Germany would be seen.

It was five minutes past six when Mr. Chamberlain rose to make his fateful declaration. It was plain that he felt a stern satisfaction in being able to say at last what he thought of the "senseless ambition" of Herr Hitler and the "sickening technique" of the Nazi Government.

That satisfaction, the House most fully shared. Cheers were the order of the afternoon, cheers at Mr. Chamberlain's arrangement of Herr Hitler as the one man responsible for the catastrophe of war.

"WE ARE READY"

There was another stern cheer at the announcement that the German Government gave an unfavourable reply to the British and French demand for a suspension of all military action against Poland the British Ambassador would ask for his passports.

"In that case," said Mr. Chamberlain, "we are ready," and again the cheers rang out.

Mr. Chamberlain's survey was encouraging and unclouded with the announcement of compulsory military training for men of 19 and 20 which he was rewarded with a general murmur of agreement and not a protest from any bench—a great change from August 1914.

Socialists were inclined to cavil at Mr. Chamberlain's remark that Signor Mussolini had been doing his best, but the last sentences of determination to see the matter through to the end were warmly applauded by the whole House. His speech included the following:

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Arthur Greenwood, the Socialist chief, was content with it. Once more a united party opposition, and Labour on record that Socialists had been critical of the Government and were becoming a manifesto of their own.

Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Independent Liberal leader, was equally brief and no less eager to demonstrate unity. He desired to say that Liberals and the War Cabinet, free from routine, to plan ahead.

After his speech no one desired to add anything to the debate, which had only lasted three quarters of an hour. The House went into committee and in five minutes more passed a vote of credit for £300,000,000 and proceeded to deal at high speed with a number of emergency bills.

VISCOUNT HALIFAX'S DENUNCIATION
'THE WORLD WILL JUDGE'

By Our Own Representative
WESTMINSTER, Friday.

An intent, determined House of Lords, in which four of the members were in uniform, cheered Viscount Halifax's statement on the Government's attitude in a spirit of whole-hearted support.

No doubt was left, when he sat down, that the House was with him in telling Germany that she had been compared to aggression in Poland as in Europe.

Lord Halifax was moderate in the denunciation of the German method. He spoke in his usual quiet, level voice, almost conversationally, but his indictment left no loose ends in its clear, definite structure.

The House manifested its agreement when, at the end of his exposition of the events which provoked yesterday's aggression, Lord Halifax looked up from his papers and said: "Of these terms and those things, the world will judge."

Lord Snell and the Marquess of Crewe, in turn endorsed the Government's policy.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Lang, reinforced with the high authority of his office the urgent moral note of Lord Halifax and other speakers.

"I honestly believe," he said, "that in the struggle we may humbly trust that God is on our side."

Eighteen emergency bills were subsequently passed by the House of Lords without debate, the Royal Assent being given by Sir Lancelot Greaves-Lord and Lord Somerleyton, the Earl of Limerick and Lord Rochdale.

The House rose at 11.31.

The heavy arrows show approximately the general direction of the German thrusts into Poland. (Full page map of Europe—Page 7.)

MR. ROOSEVELT HOPING FOR U.S. NEUTRALITY

Anti-Bombing Plea To Both Sides

CONGRESS TO MEET SOON

Changing Views On Arms Embargo

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT
WASHINGTON, Friday.

President Roosevelt was asked at his Press conference to-day whether the United States would play any part in the European crisis.

He replied:

"The only thing I can say is I not only sincerely hope so, but believe we can, and every effort will be made by this Administration so to do."

The President said this was a very critical period in world history. He asked for the closest co-operation from the Press, urging all publications to stick absolutely to the facts, checking everything before printing or broadcasting it.

Events to-day and to-morrow, he said, would probably determine whether and when he would proclaim a state of war and between which nations. The formality was a necessary prelude to putting the Neutrality Act into effect.

NEWS OF INVASION

He indicated that he intends to call Congress into special session relatively soon, but declined to make any positive prediction.

Mr. Roosevelt admitted that he had had a sleepless night. At 2.30 a.m. he said, he had telephoned to Mr. William Bullitt, the United States Ambassador in Paris.

At 4.30 a.m. an hour after he received official advices from Europe which indicated that Germany had invaded Poland and that Polish cities were being bombed, the President sent an appeal to the Governments of Germany, Poland, Great Britain, France and Italy appealing to them to refrain from bombing civilians and unfortified cities.

Mr. Sol Bloom, chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, announced to-day that a telegraphic poll which he had conducted showed that a majority of Congressmen now were in favour of Neutrality Law revision, long urged by the Administration.

Full text of appeal—Page 11.

ACCEPTANCE BY 3 NATIONS

BRITISH STATEMENT

Mr. Roosevelt's appeal for the non-bombing of civilians and unfortified towns has been agreed to by Great Britain, France and Poland.

The British Government stated:

"It was already the settled policy of His Majesty's Government, should they become involved in hostilities, to restrict their action and conduct of bombardment to strictly military objectives, upon the understanding that these rules will be scrupulously observed by all their opponents."

Paris replied that she was not concerned, because she had decided to take no military action in the current hostilities.

Message—Page 11

NOTE FROM BRITAIN HANDED OVER

REFERRED TO HITLER

It was learned at the Foreign Office late last night that Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, received Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, at 9.40 p.m.

Sir Nevile handed Herr von Ribbentrop the communication contained in the Prime Minister's speech.

Herr von Ribbentrop stated that he must refer the communication to Herr Hitler.

LATE NEWS

News received after this edition had gone to press will be found in the stop press column on page 12.

PARIS DEMAND TO GERMANY

WITHDRAW TROOPS OR GUARANTEE OPERATES

PARIS, Friday.

The French Ambassador to Germany, M. Robert Coulondre, has made a demarche in Berlin similar to that of the British Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, it is officially stated in Paris to-night.

The Note presented by M. Coulondre declares that the French guarantee to Poland will become operative unless the German troops are withdrawn from Polish territory.

Earlier to-day the Polish Ambassador in Paris, M. Lukasiewicz, had seen M. Bonnet, the Foreign Minister, notified him formally of a German act of aggression, and invoked the France-Polish Mutual Guarantee Treaty.

MARTIAL LAW

[illegible] has [illegible] general mobilisation, declaring martial law and setting up the Council of Ministers, announced that they had unanimously approved decrees presented by M. Daladier, Premier and Defence Minister, for:

General mobilisation of all land, sea and air armies of the whole of French territory, including Algeria, the Colonies and the Dependencies. The first day of the mobilisation to be tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Establishment of a state of siege in all the 89 French departments, plus the territory of Belfort and all three departments of Algeria.

Following the meeting of the Council of Ministers, M. Daladier conferred with the Air Minister, M. Guy la Chambre, with Gen. Gamelin, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, and with Gen. Colson, Chief of the Army General Staff.

Facilities for a last-minute evacuation of civilians from Paris were announced. Special trains for this purpose will run from five stations to-morrow.

ITALY OFFERS MEDIATION

In the morning M. Bonnet, the Foreign Minister, received the Italian Ambassador, Signor Quaroni, and handed him the French Government's reply to an offer by Signor Mussolini to mediate in the Polish-German dispute. The mediation proposal suggests a five-Power conference.

It is learned that the Council of Ministers decided to reply favourably to the Italian initiative. The reply of the French Government was handed later to the Italian Ambassador by M. François-Poncet, French Ambassador to Rome.

In Polish diplomatic circles here it is stated that the Duce's intervention is unacceptable.—B.U.P. and Reuter.

SPECIAL MAP OF EUROPE

A full-page map of Europe of value in following moves in the international situation appears on Page 7.

It shows frontiers, chief towns and principal lines of communication.

POLES RESIST INVASION ON THREE FRONTIERS

CONFLICT LAUNCHED WITH AIR BOMBARDMENT AT DAWN

ATTACK ON CORRIDOR FROM BOTH SIDES

Fighting was reported last night to be going on all along the German-Polish frontier and north of the Slovak-Polish frontier.

The main German attack, however, appears to comprise a pincer movement on the Corridor from Chojnice on the west and from Dzialdowo on the East Prussian side, combined with an intensive drive into Upper Silesia, which is believed to have as its objective the occupation of the Rumanian frontier.

After falling back to prepared defensive positions, the Polish Army claimed to be stemming the advance.

In Danzig itself fighting resulted in the eviction of the Poles from the railway offices. Attacks on the Polish naval stronghold at Westerplatte, at the entrance to the harbour, were repulsed.

Air raids, beginning before daybreak, were made on dozens of Polish towns, especially those on the main railway routes, according to Polish reports. The raids are described by the German authorities as attacks on aerodromes.

Bombs were dropped on the outskirts of Warsaw, near enough to bring the city's anti-aircraft guns into operation.

Conflicting reports of the incidents from both sides are given below.

INVASION BEGINS WITH BOMBING

MANY CASUALTIES

From Our Own Correspondent
WARSAW, Friday.

Hostilities with Germany opened at 6 a.m. with air attacks on Bydgoszcz, Chojnice and Terchen, in the south-west.

Incendiary and high-explosive bombs were used, and many casualties are reported at Terchen.

The Poles were taken completely by surprise, and anti-aircraft guns at Bydgoszcz only went into action during the second raid.

Planes attacked in waves of 40 or 50. Reports of bombing of such points as Tczew, Bydgoszcz, Torun, Cracow, Lwow and Vilna indicate an attempt to wreck the main railway lines, especially those from Lithuania and Rumania.

A military communique says that the following places were bombarded: Westerplatte (Danzig), Puck, Dirschau, Chojnice, Graudenz and Mlawa.

Herr Forster, the Fuehrer of Danzig, announced the annexation in a four-point proclamation. The Danzig State Constitution was abolished, and all power placed in the hands of the Reich.

In a broadcast from Berlin this morning Herr Hitler announced that Germany's proposals had been rejected by Poland. In the Polish view, this establishes the fact of German aggression.

Since 4.30 a.m. there were four air-raid alarms in Warsaw and heavy anti-aircraft fire in the suburbs to the west of the city. It was afterwards learned that aerodromes on the outskirts of the town had been bombed. A Polish Warsaw made their way to shelters without panic.

BERLIN CLAIMS EARLY SUCCESS

WAR COMMUNIQUE

The German troops have gained the height of Katowice in Upper Silesia, according to a German High Command communiqué. Other communiqués state that the advance in this area forms a line with the environs of Katowice at the meridian.

"The expected success" of the first day's operations is claimed to have been fully realised.

"In the Corridor, our troops are approaching the river Brahe and have reached the river Netze," the communiqué adds.

"In the close neighbourhood of Graudenz, fighting is at present going on."

EAST PRUSSIAN THRUST

The centre of the German thrust from East Prussia, according to Polish sources, is Mlawa, on the main railway line from Berlin to Soldau.

(Continued on Page Eleven, Column Six)

CHILDREN SENT TO SAFETY

HOSPITALS CLEARED

Britain's plans for evacuation of children, expectant mothers, the blind and hospital cases began yesterday, and substantial progress was made in the scheme to send 3,500,000 to safety.

A total of 300,000 children were transported yesterday from the London and other areas, and the national organisation was so complete that several hundred thousand children and patients from hospitals in danger areas were carried away in comfort during the day.

Everywhere there was a spirit of calm cheerfulness. Those who had to await transport to-day and to-morrow showed no anxiety.

Reports from reception areas state that all who have been evacuated have been received with complete

Evacuation details—P. 15.

ITALY'S POLICY

TO TAKE NO INITIATIVE

The Council of Ministers in Rome announced to the Italian people that Italy will take no initiative in military operations, according to the Italian radio broadcast yesterday afternoon.

Signor Mussolini presided over the Council.

The Council, it is stated, "having examined developments in the European situation that have arisen in consequence of the German-Polish conflict, the origins of which derive from the Treaty of Versailles, and having examined all documents put forward by the Italian Foreign Minister which show the tireless efforts of the Duce to ensure peace based on justice, has given its full approval to the military measures adopted up to now.

"These measures have been and continue to be of a preventive character which are not related to events."

HITLER'S THANKS TO DUCE

"AID NOT NEEDED"

ROME, Friday.

Herr Hitler to-day sent the following telegram to Signor Mussolini:

"I thank you cordially for the diplomatic and political aid which you have recently accorded to Germany and to her well-founded rights.

"I am convinced that with German military force I will be able to fulfil the mission destined for us.

"I think, then, that in these circumstances I will not have need of military aid from Italy.

"I thank you then Duce, for all you will do in the future for the common aim of Fascist and National Socialism."—Reuter.

ANGLO-GERMAN NOTES ISSUED

"BRITAIN RESOLVED"

The full text was issued last night, as a White Paper, of the correspondence recently exchanged by Governments of Great Britain and the German Government.

It is published in Page Five.

The Prime Minister, in his letter of Aug. 22 to Herr Hitler, said that the British Government were determined to fulfil their obligation to Poland.

"If the raw should arise," he continued, "they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command.

"It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured."

News Summary: Other Pages

HOME
War Cabinet may be formed to-day; ultimatum to Herr Hitler and Mr. Greenwood expected. (P. 12.)
Large crowds cheer the King when he visits 10, Downing-street. (P. 12.)
Labour party's pledge of full support to Government in resisting wicked aggression. (P. 11.)
German Embassy staff burns papers; train with luggage ready for removal. (P. 12.)
Black-out rules in force "every night from sunset to sunrise." (P. 11.)
War Office announcement of general mobilisation. (P. 8.)
Army Council regulations facing billeting powers. (P. 15.)
First day's evacuation plans work without hitch. (P. 12.)
Text of Notes exchanged between Britain and Germany. (P. 5.)
"London Gazette" Services appointments. (P. 13.)

PARLIAMENT
Prime Minister says our position is far more reassuring than in 1914. (P. 6.)
Lord Halifax declares "our consciences is clear." (P. 8.)

EMPIRE
Mr. Mackenzie King declares Canada will stand by Britain's side. (P. 9.)

FOREIGN
Hitler's speech to the Reichstag declaring his aims in war against Poland. (P. 8.)
How Danzig proclaimed its "return home." (P. 8.)
Germany broadcasts band music and air raid reports. (P. 11.)
Moscow stated to be calm in face of German-Polish hostilities. (P. 9.)

FINANCE
Cargo war risk insurance rates increased. (P. 11.)
Tin quota raised. (P. 5.)
Wall Street rally; active buying. (P. 5.)

SPORT
Australia may win Davis Cup. (Major G. H. M. Cartwright. (P. 16.)
Football League matches to be played to-day. (P. 16.)
Many other fixtures cancelled. (P. 16.)

FEATURES
Where to go, where to stay. (Page 6.)
Gardening. (Page 13.)
Week-end Opportunities. (Page 13.)
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BRIDGE NOTES . . . 14
CROSSWORD PUZZLE . . . 14
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HMV RECORDS
Greatest Artists . . .
Finest Recordings

'With stern determination Parliament resolved tonight that we must go forward to "the awful arbitrament of war." The "senseless ambition" of Herr Hitler must be defeated. So long as the Nazi Government exists and follows its "sickening technique" of the last two years there can be no peace in Europe. Thus in stark, sombre phrase the Prime Minister put the issue, and deep-voiced cheers from every bench, from every mouth in the thronged House vowed support to the great resolve'. . . . 'In Danzig . . . attacks on the Polish naval stronghold at Westerplatte, at the entrance to the harbour, were repelled.'

To Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin

Please seek interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs at 9 a.m. today, Sunday or, if he cannot see you, then arrange to convey at that time to representative of German Government the following communication:

'In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on 1st September I informed you, on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that, unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government has suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations to Poland.

'Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago, no reply has been received but German attacks on Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that, unless not later than 11 a.m. British Summer Time, today 3rd September, satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.'

If the assurance referred to in the above communication is received, you should inform me by any means at your disposal before 11 a.m. today, 3rd September. If no such assurance is received here by 11 a.m., we shall inform the German representative that a state of war exists as from that hour.

VISCOUNT HALIFAX, FOREIGN OFFICE,
5.00 A.M., SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

The Third Day

At a conference arranged on board the *Schleswig-Holstein* on Sunday morning, command of the next attack was given to Oberst Krappe of the Territorial Police Force (Landespolizei). The depleted company of marines, which had lost 82 men either killed or wounded, was strengthened by four machine gun crews from the Naval Training Depot and 45 men from the battleship's company. Support also came from some units of the Territorial Police, a battery of howitzers and a company of pioneers. Oberstleutnant Henke proposed a further postponement, arguing that the 'modern concrete system of fortifications' would require the deployment of 210mm mortars, tanks and assault boats which would allow for an attack carried out from several directions simultaneously. Just after midday, a message had arrived from Army High Command stating that Hitler had ordered that the date and time of the final attack was to be at the discretion of the local commander.

On Westerplatte, the day started with patrol activities on both sides followed by some artillery fire. At 11.00 a.m. church bells could be heard in Danzig and New Port. It was a beautiful, warm Sunday morning and not untypical except for the sound of military march tunes and cheering crowds. The people of Danzig were greeting units of the German Wehrmacht entering the city.

Back on Westerplatte further attacks took place during the rest of the day and evening but each one was beaten off.

When published elsewhere, this picture from Polish archives of Gdansk Schupo police moving into the attack has been captioned as being taken on Westerplatte itself. However, standing on the actual ground, Karel found that the picture just did not fit the landscape. True, the burning HWC workshops and cranes were familiar, but it was not until he found this close-up of the house that collapsed on Five Whistles Bend that he realised that the wreckage on the left is the roof of the same house. So these Germans are not on Westerplatte but still on the south bank of the river which lies between them and the burning buildings.

We then found this similar, but better quality shot, obviously from the same sequence, in the *Schleswig-Holstein* album.

The German Government have received the British Government's ultimatum of the 3rd September, 1939. They have the honour to reply as follows:

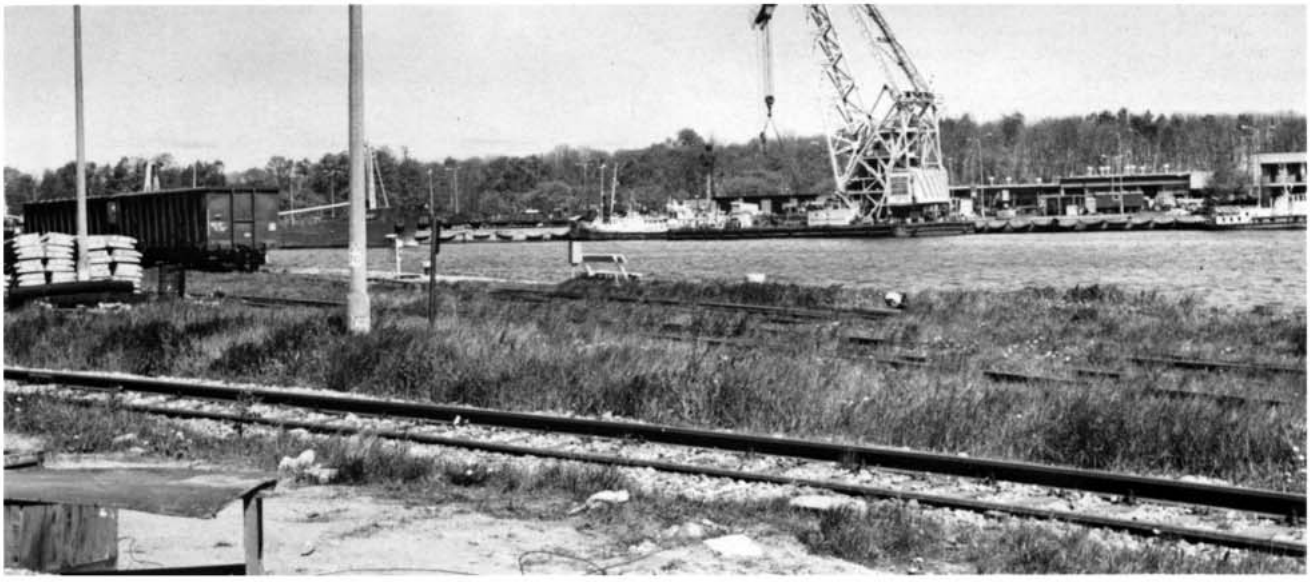
The German Government and the German people refuse to receive, accept, let alone fulfil, demands in the nature of ultimata made by the British Government.

On our eastern frontier there has for many months already reigned a condition of war. Since the time when the Versailles Treaty first tore Germany to pieces, all and every peaceful settlement was refused to all German Governments. The National Socialist Government also has since the year 1933 tried again and again to remove by peaceful negotiations the worst rapes and breaches of justice of this treaty. The British Government have been among those who, by their intransigent attitude, took the chief part in frustrating every practical revision. Without the intervention of the British Government — of this the German Government and German people are fully conscious — a reasonable solution doing justice to both sides would certainly have been found between Germany and Poland. For Germany did not have the intention nor has she raised the demands of annihilating Poland. The Reich demanded only the revision of those articles of the Versailles Treaty which already at the time of the formulation of that Dictate had been described by understanding statesmen of all nations as being in the long run unbearable, and therefore impossible for a great nation and also for the entire political and economic interest of Eastern Europe. . . . The blame for having prevented this peaceful revision lies with the British Cabinet policy. . . .

The Free City of Danzig was, in violation of all legal provisions, first threatened with destruction economically and by measures of customs policy, and was finally subjected to a military blockade and its communications strangled. All these violations of the Danzig Statute, which are well known to the British Government, were approved and covered by a blank cheque given to Poland. . . .

The German people and their Government do not, like Great Britain, intend to dominate the world, but they are determined to defend their own liberty, their independence and above all their life. The intention, communicated to us by order of the British Government by Mr King-Hall, of carrying the destruction of the German people even further than was done through the Versailles Treaty is taken note of by us, and we shall therefore answer any aggressive action on the part of England with the same weapons and in the same form.

EXTRACTS FROM A NOTE HANDED TO SIR N. HENDERSON BY VON RIBBENTROP
11.20 a.m., SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939



Your Holiday Safeguard
SURE SHIELD FRUIT LAXATIVES

6 A.M. EDITION

Daily Express

WORLD'S LARGEST DAILY SALE

No. 12,258 Monday, September 4, 1939 One Penny

CREMEX SHAMPOO

"We fight against evil things—brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution—and against them I am certain that the right will prevail."—*The Premier said. Then this news . . .*

U-BOAT TORPEDOES BRITISH LINER

100 American girls were on board

LAST MESSAGE: 'SINKING QUICKLY'

1,150 passengers

A GERMAN U-BOAT TORPEDOED AND SANK THE BRITISH LINER ATHENIA—WITH 1,470 PEOPLE ON BOARD, MOST OF THEM AMERICAN AND CANADIAN—A FEW HOURS AFTER THE START OF THE WAR YESTERDAY.

A hundred American college girls—hastening home from Europe and its troubles—were among the victims of this 1939 "Lusitania" outrage.

An Admiralty report at 5 a.m. said: "The last official information we have received from the Athenia is that the ship was sinking rapidly."

The Athenia was 200 miles west of the Hebrides when she was attacked.

SEPTEMBER 3 SUNDAY

● AT 11 O'CLOCK yesterday morning Britain declared that a state of war existed between this country and Germany.

Notification of the state of war was handed to the German Chargé d'Affaires in London at 11.15. This constituted a formal declaration of war.

At 11.25, [illegible] after the expiry of the ultimatum, the Ribbentrop note to tell us how and gave him his German reply.

This was a refusal to the German Government to give any undertaking about the withdrawal of troops.

The [illegible] is officially stated, also included proposals that, with the purpose of which seemed to be an attempt to lay the blame for the present war on Britain.

At 11.30 Sir Nevile Henderson demanded his passport.

● AT 5 O'CLOCK yesterday afternoon France declared that a state of war existed between France and Germany. France presented her ultimatum at midday.

(See Page Two)

WINSTON BACK

He is First Lord; Eden is the new Dominions Secretary

By GUY EDEN

Daily Express Political Correspondent

ONE of the first acts of the Prime Minister, as soon as Britain's declaration of war became effective yesterday, was to reconstitute the Government and to set up a War Cabinet of nine Ministers.

Mr. Winston Churchill (who, as a result as First Lord of the Admiralty—the post he held in 1914—and Lord Hankey, former chief of the Cabinet Secretariat, becomes a Minister without Portfolio. Both have seats in the War Cabinet.

STOP PRESS WAR NEWS
Central news

POLISH ENVOY REPORTED HELD BY GESTAPO

AIR RAID WARNINGS

First day of the second Great War

HITLER GOES TO POLISH FRONT

HITLER left his Chancellery in Berlin this morning for the Eastern Front, where he is to assume command of the German Armies.

Your telegrams were on the railway platform when the Führer left.

As on the outbreak of the World war he will be with his soldiers in the field, and will personally direct the operations.

He appeared in the German Army uniform of a Field Marshal.

I saw that our capital city was gripped by the tension of waiting. Crowds were standing in the streets reading the newspapers with the latest news.

Warsaw tonight is still resisting.

PAGE TWO, COLUMN THREE

FLEET BEGIN THE BLOCKADE

BRITAIN'S Navy started the blockade of Germany last night. Two radiograms of one code word each put the whole Fleet on a war footing. The first proclaimed a state of tension; the second told each commander: "Begin hostilities!"

The Fleet in northern waters, and in the Atlantic are concerned, with our first action of the war. There are no German warships in the Mediterranean to be shadowed this time.

Many ships that were declared safe from attack by the Straits of Dover were warned that they must pass through the Channel—the night-time route mentioned between Deal and the Goodwin Sands.

Any ship attempting this course does so at her own peril. If by chance she is sunk by a mine or torpedo she will be entitled to compensation.

In the north entries of ships will be accepted in the open sea only between the Orkneys and Shetlands and the Faroes. Ships coming from the Atlantic to the Channel will be ordered to pass through the German Canal. Ships coming from the Baltic will be ordered to pass through the Kiel Canal.

It is believed that some German ships are now more than three days overdue from their home ports. They will have to be convoyed.

From the Polish Coast [illegible] Dutch vessels [illegible] German U-boats are [illegible] Allies.

American Envoy bombed

From STEPHEN DILLMER
Daily Express Staff Reporter

WARSAW, Monday.

MR. DREXEL BIDDLE, United States Ambassador to Poland, escaped unhurt when a German bomb dropped near his country villa this morning.

He was in his bathroom, shaving, when the bomb dropped. The crashing sounds were deafening and the house was badly damaged.

That is why Mr. Biddle appeared unshaved this morning when arriving at the American Embassy in Warsaw tonight to work with the Ambassadors of Britain and France.

PAGE TWO, COLUMN THREE

The King's message

For 11,000,000 homes

[illegible] The King has requested to a message to broadcast to the Empire on Monday evening at 9 o'clock. The message will be broadcast to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and other parts of the Empire.

Mr. Anthony Eden becomes Dominions Secretary without a seat in the War Cabinet, but is expected shortly to be given a seat in the War Cabinet and thus be able to maintain contact between the War Cabinet and the Dominions he will have special access to it.

The War Cabinet will be composed of the members of [illegible] Ministers of the Crown, as follows:

PRIME MINISTER
Mr. Neville Chamberlain

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER
Sir John Simon

FOREIGN SECRETARY
Lord Halifax

MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE
Lord Chatfield

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY
Mr. Winston Churchill

WAR MINISTER
Mr. Hore-Belisha

AIR MINISTER
Sir Kingsley Wood

LORD PRIVY SEAL
Mr. Stanley Baldwin

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO
Lord Hankey

Lord Privy Seal

Banks close today

All banks, including the Scottish and Irish banks, will be closed today and tomorrow as a bank holiday.

Details on Page Eight

Gort, V.C., will lead our troops

THE Government announced last night that Viscount Gort, V.C., will be Commander-in-Chief of the British Field Force.

Gort will be Chief of the Imperial General Staff and General Sir Edmund Ironside, General Gort was appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff in December 1937 at 48, succeeding Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell.

Field-Marshal Lord Gort was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Home Forces.

"I feel sure that every man will do his utmost to support Lord Gort in the task he has undertaken," Mr. Hore-Belisha, Secretary of State for War, said last night.

PAGE TWO, COLUMN FIVE

Theatres, cinemas closed—may reopen

From any Viewpoint

. . . ITS CHARACTER STANDS OUT

That is why "BLACK & WHITE" holds a commanding position. Its superior standard of quality is guaranteed through the holding of vast reserves of fine old Scotch whisky. It stimulates and relieves fatigue. Ask for it by name—

"BLACK & WHITE"

"Yes the Scotch!"

When I spoke last night to the House I could not but be aware that in some parts of the House there were doubts and some bewilderment as to whether there had been any weakening, hesitation or vacillation on the part of His Majesty's Government. In the circumstances, I make no reproach, for if I had been in the same position as Hon. members not sitting on this Bench and not in possession of all the information which we have, I should very likely have felt the same. The statement which I have to make this morning will show that there were no grounds for doubt. We were in consultation all day yesterday with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were taking against Poland allowed no delay in making our own position clear. Accordingly, we decided to send our Ambassador in Berlin instructions which he was to hand at 9 o'clock this morning to the German Foreign Secretary,

That was the final Note. No such undertaking was received by the time stipulated, and, consequently, this country is at war with Germany. . . .

This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do; that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself; I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

PRIME MINISTER,
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

The Fourth Day

At 7.00 a.m. on Monday morning the old torpedo boat *T196*, the command boat of the Minesweeping Force East, opened fire on Westerplatte from a distance of 2,800 metres. The bombardment lasted for twelve minutes and was repeated again at 9.45 a.m. for a further five minutes. She fired 65 shells of 102mm calibre, concentrating mainly on the ammunition shelters which did not blow up as expected: they had been emptied long before the war!

The auxiliary boat *Von der Groeben* attached to the force shelled Polish positions twice with its 105mm gun, one shell landing between the oil tanks in New Port although they did not explode. The Danzig police soon reported three more similar hits. As a result of its poor performance, she was ordered to withdraw.

Polish sources describe heavy artillery concentrations, followed by reconnaissance sorties, the shells coming from the direction of Weichselmünde and Brösen.

At the garrison conference which took place that day, Major Sucharski raised the possibility of surrender for the first time but all the officers and senior NCOs decided unanimously to continue to fight.

Many times the Germans attempted to infiltrate along the northern shore but were bloodily repulsed by Leading Seaman Bernard Rygielski at Outpost Fort. He had two machine guns, one on top of the bunker and one nearby. This is his view to the south-east although in 1939 the field of fire would have been more restricted because of the ammunition shelters which then stood on the right — since removed and replaced by a huge car park.

Herr Hitler, September 3, 1939: 'Great Britain has for centuries pursued the aim of rendering the peoples of Europe defenceless against the British policy of world conquest by proclaiming a balance of power, in which Great Britain claimed the right to attack on threadbare pretexts and destroy that European State which at the moment seemed most dangerous. Thus, at one time, she fought the world power of Spain, later the Dutch, then the French, and, since the year 1871, the Germans. . . .

'Soldiers of the Western Army; just as before the war, so after the war Great Britain has pursued the policy of Germany's encirclement. In spite of the fact that Germany has no demands to make on any other State to the West of the Reich; in spite of the fact that Germany claims no territorial revision in this territory; and in spite of the fact that Germany has made, above all to Great Britain just as to France, the offer of a cordial understanding, indeed of friendship. The British Government, driven on

These pictures were taken from Westerplatte and show across the canal the infamous white silo — just to the left of the Heinkel floatplane. *Below:* In the foreground the burnt out remains of the Harbour and Waterways buildings.

by those warmongers whom we knew in the last war, have resolved to let fall their mask and to proclaim war on a threadbare pretext.

'The German people and your comrades in the East now expect from you, soldiers of the Western Front, that you shall protect the frontiers of the Reich, unshakable as a wall of steel and iron, against every attack, in an array of fortifications which is a hundred times stronger than that Western Front of the Great War, which was never conquered.

'If you do your duty, the battle in the East will have reached its successful conclusion in a few months, and then the power of the whole National Socialist State stands behind you. As an old soldier of the World War, and as your Supreme Commander, I am going, with confidence in you, to the Army in the East. Our plutocratic enemies will realise that they are now dealing with a different Germany from that of the year 1914.'

Soon after midnight on Monday, September 4, Hitler's Führersonderzug arrived at Bad Polzin in Pomerania, some 150 miles north-east of Berlin from where the train had departed at 9.00 p.m. the previous evening. Behind it was a second train carrying von Ribbentrop and Himmler. The two trains remained at the station under the protection of the Führer-Begleit-Bataillon, commanded by Generalmajor Erwin Rommel, for the remainder of the night until Hitler set out for an extended tour of the battlefront at 8.00 a.m. His motorcade of six Mercedes-Benz G4s, flanked by armoured cars front and rear, first visited the HQ of the 4. Armee while the Führersonderzug moved to Plietnitz further to the south. For the next two weeks Hitler

The 'new' barracks built in 1934-35 right in the centre of Westerplatte, pictured after the fighting looking south-west.

German People,

Your country and mine are now at war. Your Government has bombed and invaded the free and independent state of Poland, which this country is in honour bound to defend. Because your troops were not withdrawn in response to the Note which the British Government addressed to the German Government, war has followed.

With the horrors of war we are familiar. God knows this country has done everything possible to prevent this calamity. But now that the invasion of Poland by Germany has taken place, it has become inevitable.

You are told by your Government that you are fighting because Poland rejected your Leader's offer and resorted to force. What are the facts? The so-called 'offer' was made to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin on Thursday evening, two hours before the announcement by your Government that it had been 'rejected'. So far from having been rejected, there had been no time even to consider it.

Your Government had previously demanded that a Polish representative should be sent to Berlin within twenty-four hours to conclude an agreement. At that time the 16 Points subsequently put forward had not even been communicated to the Polish Government. The Polish representative was expected to arrive within a fixed time to sign an agreement which he had not even seen. This is not negotiation. This is a dictate. To such methods no self-respecting and powerful State could assent. Negotiations on a free and equal basis might well have settled the matter in dispute.

You may ask why Great Britain is concerned. We are concerned because we gave our word of honour to defend Poland against aggression. Why did we feel it necessary to pledge ourselves to defend this Eastern Power when our interests lie in the West, and when your Leader has said he has no interest to the West? The answer is — and I regret to have to say it — that nobody in this country any longer places any trust in your Leader's word.

He gave his word that he would respect the Locarno Treaty; he broke it. He gave his word that he neither wished nor intended to annex Austria; he broke it. He declared that he would not incorporate the Czechs in the Reich; he did so. He gave his word after Munich that he had no further territorial demands in Europe; he broke it. He gave his word that he wanted no Polish provinces; he broke it. He has sworn to you for years that he was the mortal enemy of Bolshevism; he is now its ally.

Can you wonder his word is, for us, not worth the paper it is written on?

The German-Soviet Pact as a cynical volte face, designed to shatter the Peace Front against aggression. This gamble failed. The Peace Front stands firm. Your Leader is now sacrificing you, the German people, to the still more monstrous gamble of a war to extricate himself from the impossible position into which he has led himself and you.

In this war we are not fighting against you, the German people, for whom we have no bitter feeling, but against a tyrannous and forsworn régime which has betrayed not only its own people but the whole of Western civilisation and all that you and we hold dear.

May God defend the right!

PRIME MINISTER,
BROADCAST TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE,
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1939

toured the Eastern Front, returning to his mobile headquarters train each evening which moved to the Gross Born troop training area on September 5; Ilnau on the 8th; Gogolin down in the south of Poland on the 13th, before it returned north again on the 18th to Goddentow-Lanz, 65 kilometres north-west of Danzig. By now the Polish army assembled for a counter-attack on Bzura had been surrounded and German forces were at the gates of Warsaw. After Soviet forces launched their offensive from the east on September 17, a demand was broadcast for Poland's unconditional surrender. By the 19th when Hitler drove into Danzig, the eventual fate of Poland was already sealed.

Today the entire right, or northern, wing has gone to make room for the concrete avenue leading to 'monument' hill.

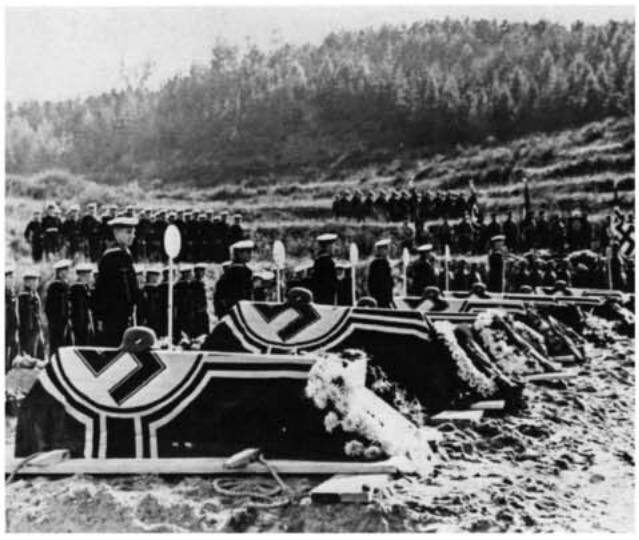
The Fifth Day

Polish accounts reported active German patrols at dawn on Tuesday. From 9.00 a.m. to 10.45 a.m., a battery of heavy field howitzers laid down concentrated fire on Guardroom II, the barracks and the power plant, with the *Schleswig-Holstein* firing in support. As a result of this and previous bombardments, the barracks sub-basement, the last garrison shelter, was gradually being reduced to a heap of rubble. The wounded lying on the floor could not be properly protected. With every explosion outside, the sandbags blocking the windows disintegrated and metal splinters, debris, rocks and dust covered everyone inside. The men were being wounded several times over and the Doctor, Captain Mieczyslaw Slaby, was unable to cope with the number of injuries. Lieutenant Pajak, one of the first casualties on Friday, had now developed gangrene.

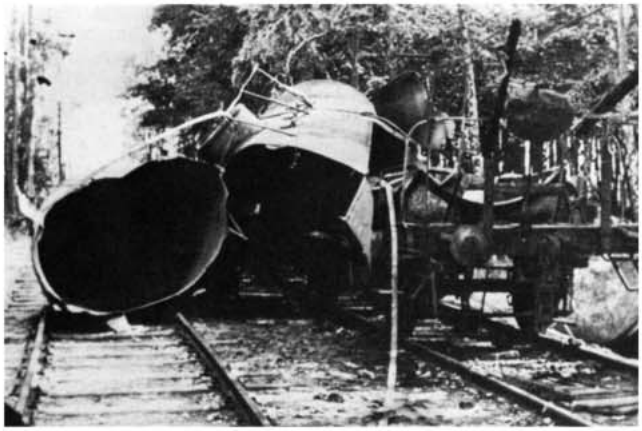
Shortly before the outbreak of war, the Danzig police had requisitioned a goods truck bound for Westerplatte which would have provided first aid kits, medicines and surgical instruments. But now the wounded could not even be evacuated to be given proper hospital attention.

The garrison had food stocks for a four week siege, but by the second day neither hot meals nor coffee were available. The wounded received hot boiled water to drink. Meanwhile night runners distributed tinned food and biscuits and the occasional cigarettes or bottle of brandy salvaged from the NCOs' mess.

That afternoon, over the other side of the canal, German dead were buried with full military honours to the strains of the *Schleswig-Holstein*'s musicians.



Honours for the fallen in the midst of battle. On September 5, 20 SS and police, 6 marines and 1 sailor were buried in a new war cemetery begun in Danzig-Silberhammer. There are widely differing casualty figures for German forces involved at Westerplatte, the total dead being given in various reports as anything between 200 to 1,000.



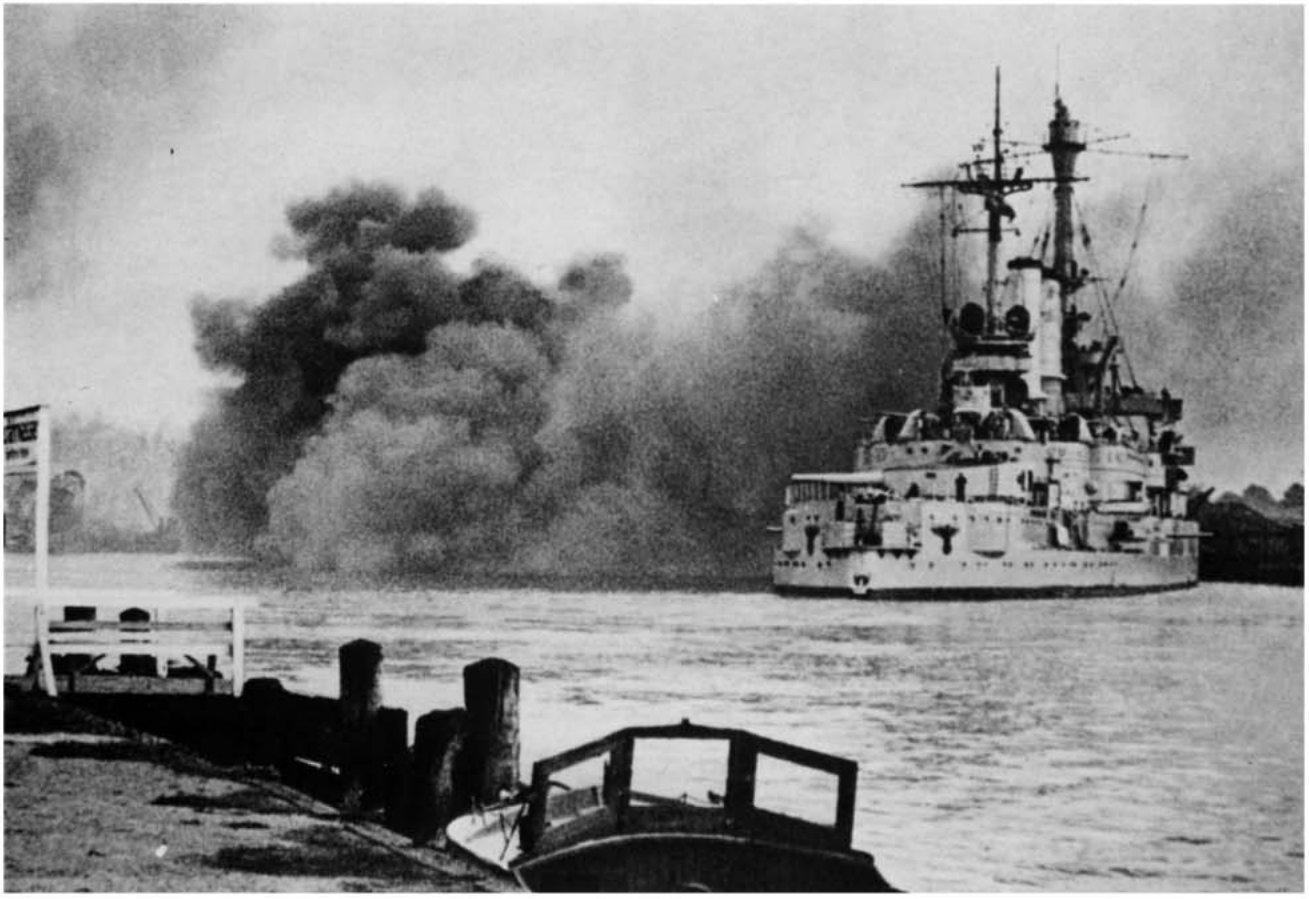
The Sixth Day

At 3.00 a.m. on Wednesday German pioneers brought up a railway wagon full of fuel with the aim of exploding it well within Polish territory, so destroying the woods and guardrooms in the process and forcing the defenders to retreat or surrender. German sources later claimed that the driver had released the carriage too early and put pioneers' lives in danger, but it seems more probable that the defenders had hit the tanker with anti-tank or machine gun fire.

When that idea failed, the pioneers resorted to flame-throwers but with equally poor success. Only the generator hut and railway station were hit. In mid-afternoon a second attempt was made to set fire to the woods, using two railway tankers which were pushed deeper into the defended area, but the fire only lasted fifteen minutes before it extinguished itself. The unscrewed tracks prevented the wagons penetrating too far, although this point was never admitted by German commentators.

Also during the afternoon Outposts Przystan and Lazienki were shelled by the SS-Heimwehr infantry guns. There were more assaults on Fort and Guardroom I during the night. The condition of the wounded further deteriorated. It was decided to still try to hold out, but Major Sucharski stated that if the condition of the wounded became even more desperate then he would order his men to lay down their arms, whether they liked it or not.

Early on Wednesday morning — the sixth day of the siege — the Germans resorted to a tactic copied of old . . . only this time it wasn't the traditional wagon loaded with gunpowder! Railway fuel tankers were brought up and pushed down the line with the intention of exploding them inside the Polish perimeter. However the Poles had already prepared for such an eventuality — although more with an attack from an armoured train in mind — and they had loosened a section of the track. A second attempt, while getting further into the forest, also failed miserably.



The Seventh Day

At 3.00 a.m. on Thursday the German marines again moved to occupy their original positions and the platoon of machine guns under the command of Leutnant Hartwig returned to New Port to occupy the same positions as on the first day of fighting.

At 3.57 a.m. a klaxon sounded on the *Schleswig-Holstein* and she left again for Westerplatte. At 4.20 a.m. she opened fire with all her 150mm and AA guns. Starting from the eastern end, slowly the barrage rolled over the central region of the peninsula. Machine guns from New Port provided supplementary fire. At 5.00 a.m. the shelling stopped to allow the assault groups to move in; 25 minutes later Henke requested that the 88mm guns create a curtain of fire over the western side, probably to prevent the Poles from escaping.

The *Schleswig-Holstein* pictured from the north-eastern corner of the New Port (Neufahrwasser) thundering away from mid-stream.

Obviously taken at the battle's end, almost the entire crew appear to be looking at the effects of the ship's bombardment on the red wall.

'Marinesoldaten der Sturmkompanie gehen mit einer Pak an der "Roten Mauer"'. The famous red wall can be seen here on the right, beside these marines hauling up a 2cm Flak on its two-wheeled trailer. Although designed as an AA weapon, the gun was successfully employed in the Polish campaign as a light anti-tank gun against ground targets.

From 5.50 a.m. all the 150mms, 88mm AA guns and one 280mm gun concentrated their fire on the old ammunition fort and Guardroom II which was hit by a 280mm shell and collapsed. The crew miraculously survived by taking refuge in the sub-basement. The bombardment ceased at 6.20 a.m., leaving only the AA guns combing the woods to eliminate the imaginary marksmen. The battleship then withdrew.

Unfortunately no trace of the red wall now remains along the canal side due to its widening but at the eastern end, where it originally bent inland, a steel fence more or less marks the line where it stood in 1939. *Below left:* **Looking south-west towards the canal and** *right* **north-east to the sea.**

The clutter of debris at the eastern end where Nowy Port church serves as a reference point.

Supporting the assault by the marines, pioneers and infantry, were a platoon of anti-tank guns from SS-Heimwehr, platoons of infantry guns and mortars, and two units of the Schutzpolizei but, in spite of this massive support, the attack did not make any headway and was called off at 7.25 a.m. At 8.30 a.m. the pioneers made another attempt to set fire to the woods by spraying petrol on the trees from two railway wagons.

The bombardment immediately preceding surrender was the most intensive of all. It took away the defenders' last reserves of mental and physical strength. Nevertheless, Major Sucharski's order to surrender was received with bitter reluctance, underlying which was a determination to fight to the last. The Major was, however, convinced that the garrison had fulfilled its objective and that further sacrifice was unnecessary. Finally the white flags appeared, first on the barracks, then on a dug-out near the ruin of Guardroom II.

Now beyond the wall, German troops occupy the defence position of Outpost Deik (see map pages 8-9). This area is now inside the docks perimeter and requires special permission to enter.

Left: **Major Sucharski pictured immediately after the surrender.** *Centre:* **Unfortunately also nothing remains of the old fort facing the canal where the Swastika flag was raised over Westerplatte.** *Right:* **Having had time to change, Major Sucharski is saluted by Generalmajor Eberhardt at the official surrender ceremony at which he was allowed to retain his sword.**

Slowly, groups of unarmed, unshaven soldiers in torn, dusty and bloody uniforms emerged from their battle stations and gathered in front of the barracks. Major Sucharski took this opportunity to explain the position to them and to express his gratitude for carrying out their duty. All present honoured their fallen comrades.

Then, leaving the command in the hands of Captain Franciszek Dabrowski, in the company of Sergeant Leonard Piotrowski and Private Marcin Dobies, Major Sucharski proceeded to formally surrender the garrison.

Oberstleutnant Henke was given the task of receiving the surrender. The companies of marines and pioneers were immediately brought back to the front line again and at 10.30 a.m. the group of Polish soldiers approached the front line.

Henke took Major Sucharski to Kapitän Kleikamp who congratulated him on the valour of his force before introducing him to Generalmajor Eberhardt who, in further recognition, returned to the Polish officer his sabre with the right to wear it during captivity.

At 11.33 a.m., Kapitän Kleikamp sent a final message to Naval Command East: 'Westerplatte surrendered'.

That afternoon, as the Polish prisoners moved towards the transport to take them into captivity, a command rang out and, as a mark of respect for a gallant foe, the flanking German soldiers and sailors sprang to attention.

Centre: **With Captain Franciszek Dabrowski, the second-in-command leading, 1st Lieutenant Stefan Grodecki (in beret) and Sergeant Leonard Piotrowski hand over Guardhouse I after the surrender.** *Right:* **Apart from the ruined barracks, this is the only major structure available for inspection on Westerplatte today, yet even that would have gone by now as it lay directly in the path of the new dockyard railway. Bold battles, however, require bold decisions, and by the 1960s, such was the desire to preserve what little remained of the battlefield of one of the greatest exploits in Polish military history, that the entire structure was uprooted and moved to its present position in 1967. We didn't believe it when we were first told but the picture on page 53 proves it!**

Captain Dabrowski was escorted to each strongpoint in turn. This is the entrance to the bunker of Outpost Fort.

Left: **Captain Dabrowski heads the column of prisoners as they are marched down to the transport which is to take them to Danzig.** *Right:* **Today the Westerplatte Monument, unveiled in 1966, overlooks the spot.**

The seriously wounded (1st Lieutenant Leon Pajak and Private Wladyslaw Lakomiec) about to be carried away.

Awaiting the arrival of the buses near the railway gate.

Defeat with honour; victory with triumph. As one commander marches out, another makes his jubilant entrance. On September 19, Hitler moved his headquarters for the first time during the campaign from the Führersonderzug to the Kasino Hotel in Zoppot *(right)*, just along the coast from Danzig, where it remained until Hitler left for Berlin on September 26.

Tuesday the 19th and the Führer enters Danzig to a tumultuous welcome. The sweet revenge he must have felt on entering the city so long a bone of contention was only marred by the fact that by now Hitler had hoped he would instead be driving into Warsaw. There the Poles, although surrounded by the massive German pincer movement, were still holding out; his earlier call for an unconditional surrender having gone unanswered. Two days before Poland had suffered a mortal blow when the Soviet Government announced that it had 'ordered its troops to cross the frontier and take under their protection the life and property of the population of the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia'. Dr Moscicki, President of the Polish Republic, proclaimed that 'when our army is withstanding the armed might of Germany, our eastern neighbour has invaded our land in violation of solemn covenants' and stated that it was not the first time that Poland had been invaded from both west and east.

The route of Hitler's motorcade ran past the railway station between Karrenwall and Horst-Hoffmannwall — what is today Okopowa and 3 Maja.

Turning into Danzig's main street, now called Dluga.

The houses on Dluga were heavily damaged in the fighting in 1945 and after the war they were rebuilt in roughly the same style but with detail alterations. *Left:* **The procession has reached the square outside the Artushof (to the left of the fountain) where he was due to make his first speech since his address to the Reichstag on September 1 (page 28).**

Gauleiter Albert Forster leads the Führer into the historic Guildhall built in the 14th century during the heyday of the Teutonic knights.

American CBS correspondent William Shirer was one of those present: 'I had a seat on the aisle, and as he strode past me to the rostrum I thought he looked more imperious than I had ever seen him. Also he was about as angry during his speech as I've ever seen him. When he spoke of Britain his face flamed up in hysterical rage. Afterwards a Nazi acquaintance confided to me that the "old man" was in a terrible rage because he had counted on making today's speech in Warsaw, that he had waited three or four days outside the Polish capital, burning to enter it like a conquering Caesar and make his speech of victory, and that when the Poles inside refused to surrender and each day continued their stubborn resistance, his patience had cracked and he rushed to Danzig to make his speech. He had to talk! We had expected Hitler to offer peace to the West and announce what the future of Poland would be. He did neither, merely remarking that Poland would never be recreated on the Versailles model and that he had no war aims against Britain and France, but would fight them if they continued the war. When Hitler brushed past me going down the aisle, he was followed by Himmler, Brückner, Keitel, and several others, all in dusty field-grey. Most of them were unshaven and I must say they looked like a pack of Chicago gangsters. Himmler, who is responsible for Hitler's protection, kept shoving people back in the aisle, muttering at them.'

I tried to find a solution. I submitted proposals orally to those in power in Poland at that time. They knew these proposals — they were more than moderate. I do not know in what state of mind the Polish Government could have been to reject such proposals.

You know the developments of those days in August. I believe it would have been possible to avoid war were it not for the British guarantee and the incitement of these apostles of war.

As you know, I have ordered our air force most strictly to limit themselves only to military objectives. But our opponents in the East and West must not take advantage of this. In future we shall take an eye for an eye, and for every bomb we shall answer with five bombs.

We have seen that in England this co-operation between Germany and Russia has been regarded as a crime.

To these Western outbursts I give this answer: Russia remains what she is, namely, Bolshevik, and Germany remains what she is, namely, National Socialist. But neither the Russian nor the German Government wants to be drawn into war in the interests of the Western Democracies.

Germany's political aims are limited. We shall come to an understanding with Russia about this, as she is the nearest neighbour whom this affects. We shall never go to war about this, because German aspirations are limited. England ought really to welcome an agreement between Germany and Russia, because such an agreement sets at rest England's fears of unlimited German expansion.

I have no war aims against England and France. I have tried to maintain peace between these countries and to establish friendly relations between the English and the German nations. Poland will never arise again in the form laid down by the Versailles Treaty. Not only Germany, but also Russia guarantees this.

If England now continues the war she reveals her real aims, that she wants war against the German Government, and I have the honour to stand here as representative of this regime. It is for me the greatest honour to be regarded in that way.

When England says that the war will last three years, then I can only say that I am sorry for France. If it lasts three years the word capitulation will not arise on our side, nor in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh years.

About one thing there can be no doubt — we are taking up the challenge.

ADOLF HITLER, DANZIG,
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1939

Hitler was forced to cancel his tour of the battlefield scheduled for the next day (due to a last minute problem with Stalin over the German/Soviet demarcation line) so he was not able to return to Danzig until Thursday. Forster was now in his element as he escorted Hitler along the old town waterfront to the waiting launch. Rommel and Keitel are also prominent.

Today the heroic stand of the 200 at Westerplatte in September 1939 is accorded its rightful place in the history of Poland, since acknowledged by the monument unveiled on the site in 1966. Unfortunately, the historical importance of Westerplatte in the immediate post-war years was overlooked and the remains of the 'old barracks', officers' villa and NCOs' Kasino were all cleared away. Even worse, although carried out for practical reasons, the canal was widened in the late 1960s and a strip of land about 60 yards in depth was carved from the southern side of the peninsula. With it went the famous red wall, what remained of the main gate, the old Schupo guardhouse nearby, Guardhouse No. II and the old ammunition fort. It was only in the late 1960s that people realised what had been lost and efforts were started to save Westerplatte as a historic battleground.

Although Wiktor and Karel crossed to Westerplatte on the dockyard ferry, right through the field of fire laid down by the Schleswig-Holstein, tourists arrive by car or bus via the land route. One arrives first at the tank memorial — the T-34 somewhat out of place on this German-Polish battlefield — in front of which lies the casket containing the ashes of Major Sucharski who died in 1946. However, few realise that the Russian tank is positioned exactly on the site of the former Guardhouse No. V.

Visitors then proceed to Guardhouse No. I — one of the most amazing aspects of it being that the entire structure was bodily moved some 50 yards from its original position in 1967 to make room for the new dockyard railway — surely the most demonstrable proof of the strength of the 'movement' to preserve what remains. Outside stand two 280mm shells similar to those fired at the fortress by the Schleswig-Holstein's guns; inside is a small museum.

It is candid pictures like this, taken by Hitler's friend and photographer Heinrich Hoffman, that make one wonder just what was going through Hitler's mind at the time. In the background we see the town-side waterfront of Gdansk.

Arriving at Westerplatte. *Left:* **Today's ferry landing stage (only for the use of dockyard workers) is a little further to the east of the original location. Hoffmann's picture** *(right)* **shows Hitler's launch passing this point on its way to the 1939 landing spot.**

Kapitän Kleikamp and three of his officers stand beneath the shot-up sign board we saw on page 21 ready to give Hitler a guided tour of Westerplatte.

Our author, Wiktor Kurowski, about to begin his own tour of the old battlefield in April 1989, pauses at the approximate site of the old landing stage.

Left: **Kleikamp, map in hand, leads Hitler up to Outpost Prom, the defensive position which played such an important part on the first day.** *Right:* **With the removal of 60 yards or so from the canal bank, Outpost Ferry probably lay here, close to this spot at the water's edge.**

Anyone visiting Westerplatte today has to remember that one can only see about half of the terrain that comprised the fortress in 1939. For, in addition to the strip of land that was dug away, two parts of the peninsula are off-limits to tourist visitors: the military base at the north-western end and the harbour docks along the length of today's southern waterfront. At the docks, nothing of historical interest remains to be seen; it is just a large tract of concrete slabs with warehouses, cranes and piles of goods stacked on the quayside. At the military base, on the other hand, several of the original buildings are reported to survive, among them Guardhouse No. IV and the power station. The latter building can, however, be seen because it stands close to the fence separating the military from the public area.

Though much may have gone or be in a restricted area, much still remains to be seen. Most visitors take the broad avenue leading towards 'monument hill'. On the way, they stop to have a look at the largest relic of 1939: the ruins of the 'new barracks'. They then continue past the foundations of Guardhouse No. III and end up climbing the high mound topped by the monument erected in 1966. From this spot one has a clear view of the river and of the buildings on the far bank in which the Germans set up their deadly machine gun posts: the 'white silo' and the lighthouse, etc.

For the visitor who cares to get off the beaten track and wander around (like our

Left: **Rapt attention as the captain of the *Schleswig-Holstein* explains the significance of Prom before the party descends from the high ground past the ruins of the German Schupo guardhouse** *(right)*. **This was erected just outside the main gate with the intention of trying to keep an eye on the Poles and the activities going on in the Transit Depot.**

Left: **Hitler then walked to view the remains of Guardhouse V. One of the officers prominent in the group with the highest First World War decoration — the Pour le Mérite — around his neck, is Vizadmiral Lothar von Arnault de la Periere, the famed submariner of WWI. Now he was the Marinebevollmächtigter in Danzig for the Kriegsmarine. We are looking south with the Kasino in the background and officers' mess on the right. Unfortunately no trace of either building remains today** *(right).*

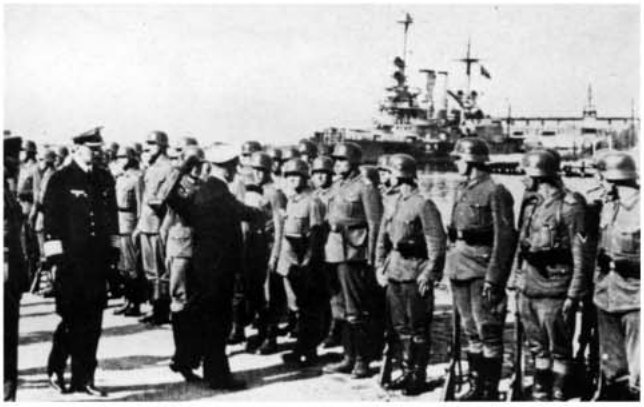
photographer/researcher Karel Margry), there is much more to be seen. In the trees between the entrance to Westerplatte and the T-34 can be found the original shelter and the embankment where the Polish machine gun was set up that drove off the first German attack at the railway gate. Nearby, overgrown with trees, survive several of the earthen embankments built to protect the Polish ammunition dumps, and behind it, close to the sea, the original bunker of Outpost Fort still stands.

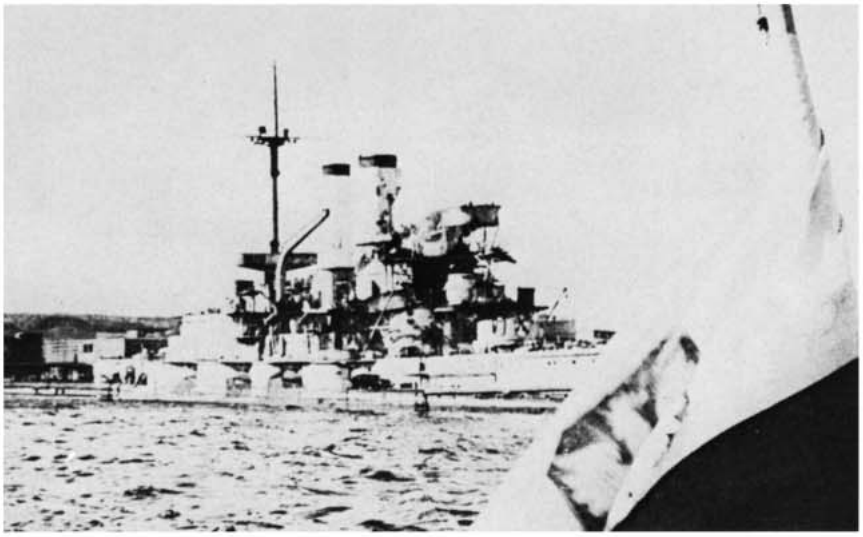
Left: **Possibly the most well-known photograph of the entire Westerplatte series: Hitler examining the effect of shelling on the gun embrasure next to the main entrance to the barracks. Forster and Kleikamp look on.** *Right:* **Unfortunately that was the wing which has since been demolished but this is exactly the same angle today.**

Left: **Having descended the embankment at the extreme western tip of Westerplatte, Hitler has just passed through the gate between Zone B (the Polish Depot) and Zone A where the ship lies moored ready for inspection.** *Right:* **The area behind the fence is now a military area with all photography strictly forbidden.**

With congratulations and thanks Hitler takes his leave, crossing back to the southern bank where his Mercedes-Benz is waiting.

Below right: **A few days earlier, on September 18, Admiral Raeder had inspected marines at exactly the same spot.**





So what happened to the ship which fired those first shots that began it all? After the surrender of Westerplatte, the ***Schleswig-Holstein*** supported the army in land operations and remained at Gdynia (Gotenhafen to the Germans) for the remainder of the war. She underwent further modifications to her armament to add more AA firepower but was severely damaged by the RAF on December 18, 1944 with 28 crewmen killed. A fire two days later burned for 12 hours and virtually gutted the ship which was scuttled at the entrance to the port on March 21, 1945 *(above)*. In 1956 she was finally broken up, but part of her plating was saved and made up into the various plaques and signboards *(right)* on Westerplatte. Two of her 280mm shells were also preserved and can be seen today outside Guardhouse I.

WARTOWNIA NR.1. ODBUDOWANA
W CZYNIE SPOŁECZNYM POD PA-
TRONATEM GŁOSU WYBRZEŻA
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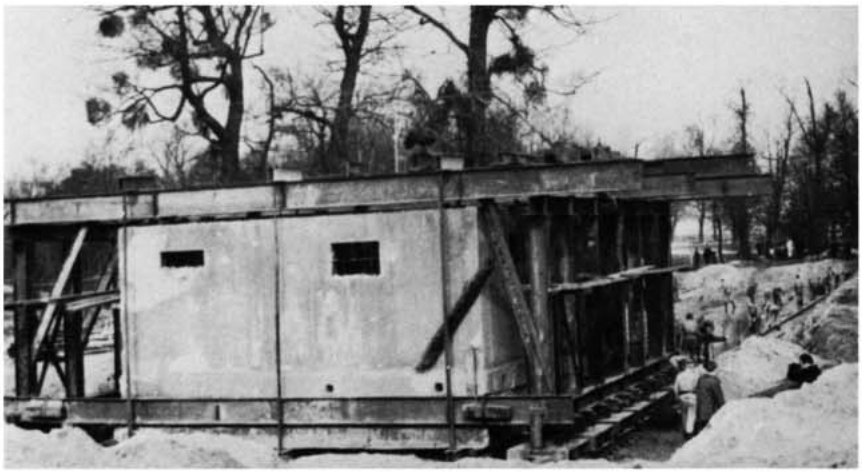

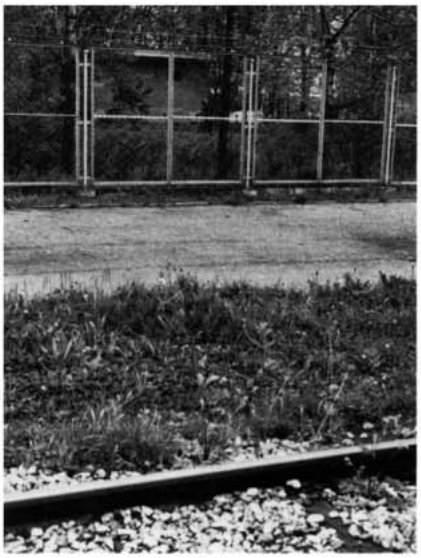

And this is the proof we promised to show that the whole guardroom was moved lock, stock and barrel to make way for a new railway line. *Right:* This was the original location of the guardhouse, now seen on the far side of the fence.

The guardhouse is now a small museum — one of the prize exhibits being this case — seen *left* being carried into captivity by Warrant Officer 1st Class Edward Szewczuk. *Right:* Major Sucharski's uniform jacket is also on display.

LA MANCHE
DUNKIERKA
NA MORZU
SRÓDZIEMNE
ATLANTYK
NA LADZIE
TURKAWIE
OLSZTYNIE
JESTEŚMY
BOGU
DZIĘKUJEMY